

I see a car pass, filled with girls, a man walking his dog, and a little boy with an ice cream cone. I watch an old guy sitting on his porch, and a mother rocking her baby to sleep on a park bench. So much going on — that I am missing out on! What will I do to get to the other side?

check out the rest of Vincent's POW on page 5

You're in for a treat this week editorial note readers, usually it's this same old editor ranting and raving about the beauty of The Beat Within and its powerful contributors, or questioning and examining why someone finds fault with such a powerful publication and program. Other times we ride the wave of the news of the day and attempt to share our take in this editorial. Well, this week we want to hand over the reigns of this box to our old friend and colleague, the Poetic Prisoner, who in our eyes is a part of the beauty and success of The Beat Within. He was once one of you readers/contributors from the inside. We first met the Poetic Prisoner when he was a fifteen years old housed in the max unit in SF/YGC many years ago. From YGC he was sent to the CYA where he spent more than six years. Now close to two years after being paroled from CYA, the Poetic Prisoner has touched so many lives as our colleague, and he has also openly allowed us to be a part of his life, the good times and bad. It is a great honor for this editor to move over for the Poetic Prisoner, not so much to let him tell you how he sees it poetically, but to embrace you with a little commentary from the heart.

And it's much more of an honor to be thrust into the first page of The Beat — even before those wonderful Pieces Of the Week. For the past eight years this publication has meant everything to me. From being my therapist when I was in the hall, to being a friend to write to when I was in the Youth Authority, and now being my salvation, like a life jacket keeping me afloat when at any moment I could fall into the depths of the ocean and drown.

It hasn't been easy, but I've learned more about life than I can explain. One of the things I've learned is that virtually everything has a good side and a bad side. That's why the idea of freedom is better when you aren't free. Or why a beautiful person can start to talk and turn into the ugliest person in the world. Or why even something as magnificent as The Beat can be tainted.

Not tainted in the sense that we constantly get writings from people who would rather speak with hate than educate — that comes with the territory. I'm talking about tainted in the sense that with every system, occupation, and/or distribution of power there are politics. Politics meaning the theory and practice of forming and running organizations. And while office politics here at The Beat are far less brutal than your average politics, there are still immoral instances that go on within the confines of our fascinating Beat community. And I'm not taking away from The Beat as a publication at all. I'm just pointing out our faults as an organization, because who would we be to contemptuously respond to your pieces without first taking a glance at ourselves.

There are your everyday immoralities just like with any other office setting — gossip, power struggles, and nosiness, to name a few, but the one that disturbs me the most is our organizational hierarchy and the way it takes away from our sense of community. Sometimes it seems like people like me are only considered the essence of the publication when it's convenient. Part of it is a generational gap, but a big part of it is just human nature. When humans feel a sense of ownership over something that was meant to be unconditionally shared, they pass ownership onto those they trust without hesitation. But as soon as that something becomes threatened in the eyes of the owner, we realize that the owner will snatch the reigns from everyone else so that he can gather control once again. It's a devastating cycle because once he's passed on ownership, the original owner instills a belief among his people that we all have some sort of ownership. Then, with one snatch of the hand, that owner not only snatches up that something, but he also snatches up the belief that we are a collective community. It happens all the time and in many situations.

It's been a pleasure helping to write this editor's note because this is a step in the right direction. And don't get me wrong, there have been times where we were taking steps in the right direction, and I, personally, made mistakes to make sure that didn't happen. I'm just as much the subject of my criticism as anyone else and I don't want my thoughts to be perceived as selfish and placing all the responsibility on everyone but myself. One of the hardest things to achieve with anything is balance. So this is my attempt to bring balance to our very powerful publication. I hope everyone will be as bold as I have been and attempt to work out their own imbalances without causing too much of a ruckus.

I thank The Beat for giving me the opportunity to try my hand at this honorable task and without further ado, we'll get back to Beat logistics.

Thank you Poetic Prisoner for stepping up on a whim to share your powerful words with our editorial note readers.. Moving right along, here are the topics that were discussed in our nearly fifty workshops prior to the writing that fills the pages of this special issue.

Our first topic: "Conversation with the almost dead — At 12: 01 am Wednesday morning, Donald Beardslee is scheduled to be executed for killing two women. He admits that he committed the murders, but he also suffers from brain damage.

What we're interested in hearing from you is the conversation you would have with Mr. Beardslee, or any of the more than 3,000 people on death row in the United States. What would you ask him? Would you ask him how he is feeling as he gets ready to be killed? Would you want to know how he felt when he committed the

murders?

What would you want to say to him or her or tell him or her? Don't just tell him/her to keep his/her head up, take it deeper, what would you want to talk about with someone who is facing his or her immediate execution?"

This topic surprised us given the number of writers who did respond.

Our second topic generated very good discussion in the workshops as a whole, and we think the writing also speaks volumes. The topic: "Until There's A Cure — In this world, there are many diseases that guarantee that death is imminent. You know which ones we're talking about: AIDS, cancer, muscular dystrophy, and a disease that's affecting our very own communities "hood sickness."

This week, however, we're asking you, "If you could find a cure for an incurable disease, what disease would you cure?" What is it about this disease that makes you want to use your magical cure on it? Is it because it affects so many people or because it's one that you yourself are afraid of contracting? What kind of an impact will finding a cure for this disease have on mankind? Who would benefit most from your cure? Have you ever known someone who has fallen victim to one of these fatal diseases? What kind of an impact did that person have on your life? All right doctors, let us know which disease you're going to rid mankind of and why."

Our third topic: "Attention All Entrepreneurs! — If you're creative, have a love for money, and are interested in making your community a positive one, then this is the topic for you.

If you could start your own business, one that did something positive for your community, what would it be? Who would work for you? How would it serve your community in a positive way? And how would you make your business a success?"

This topic, too, produced good conversation, and the writing, well, let's see.

Our last topic: "Super Bowl XXXIX — OK NFL football fans, we are down to four teams, Michael Vick's Atlanta Falcons versus Donovan McNabb's Philadelphia Eagles, and the reigning Super Bowl Champions, Tom Brady's New England Patriots travel to Pittsburgh to play the hottest team in football, Jerome Bettis' Steelers. The winners go to Jacksonville Florida to play the Super Bowl for the world championship the first Sunday in February.

What we want from you, that is, if you love chocolate, not gambling, pick the Super Bowl winner and the final score of the game, and The Beat will bring you and your peers the chocolate of your choice. It's not hard folks, football fan or not, pick the winning team, the final score, and if you do not pick the exact score, then the closest combined score will bring chocolate to your taste buds. Good luck, the more votes by your unit, the better your odds."

No scores will be posted in this issue, but the winners to this topic will be announced in issue 10.04.

Yes indeed, we have our 12th editor's note writing contest. The question to write about is: "Why Do You Write?" You are more than welcome to tell us in a sentence or two, but if you really want to be considered for our grand prize money orders, you need to step up big, with a pretty good story, good examples, and a good argument that best explains your love for writing.

Writing is so personal. Daily we find every contribution, be it from the hall, CYA or prison, to be priceless. We know every single one of you has your reason for writing. Who turned you on to writing? Who helped you realize how important writing is? How has writing helped you during these incarcerated times? What inspires you? What do you hope happens with your writings? What's the hardest part about writing? How have you made writing a habit? What do you suggest to those who fear writing? Tell us a story about how writing has affected you or others.

With this said, this editorial note contest is open to all readers, incarcerated or not, of The Beat. The contest is open till March 19, 2005. We definitely hope it reaches more readers than our last contest.

Our first-place winner will receive \$100 money order. Second place \$50. Third and fourth place receive \$25 money orders. Best of luck if you choose to take on this topic. Now tell us your thoughts on writing.

Before we say goodbye from page 2, let's praise our latest POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients! Props to Vincent for delivering two knockout pieces, and to JePeado, both from the 150 Crew. We equally salute Margen, Lil' F, Lil' Dakota, Eric, and Dre from SF/YGC. Then there's Diamond D from Marin and Toot from San Mateo who step up impressively with thoughtful pieces.

In closing, we would like to dedicate this issue, on the wonderful suggestion by the Poetic Prisoner, to his colleague, our colleague, Mervyn Wool aka Pure Dragon, who at one time was looking at 55 years to life in SF/YGC, being tried as an adult, and eventually beating his 707 hearing and doing CYA time. Upon his parole he became a wonderful colleague, and has been for the last three years at The Beat office. Most recently, he graduated from Heald's Business College while still putting in hours and doing workshops at The Beat Within. This issue is for you Merv, and with that said, in your honor we would like to pull out of the closet, with your help, your powerful fictional story, "Return of The Dragon." We will begin running it from the initial chapters next week, with the hope that you will pick it up and complete this amazing story. Thanks Mervyn Wool, this Beat is for you!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio and Donna Hunter

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez, Matt Melamed and Arlene Mitri.

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jason Treas, Allan Tinker, David Muhammad, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Dashena Burke, Miguel Bracho, Jermaica Freeman, Andreas Afoa, Selleck Fiataungalua, Nikki Fiataungalua, Edwin Pineda, Jumeka Jenkins, Osmar Morado, Teafra Stamps, Jay Conaway, Margaux Ray, Daniel Leonard, Hector Gonzalez, LaCriesha Batte, Joseph Blake, Omar Turcios, Mervyn Wool, Dennis Morton, Keir Davidson, Daniela Rible, Roy Hodgson, Will Roy, Eric Strenger, Devin Melvin.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatly acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – Annie E. Casey Foundation, California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaf Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note	2
Pieces of the Week	4
Co-Pieces of the Week	8
Standouts	15
Voices In Spanish	43
Attention All Entrepreneurs!	46
Coversation With The Almost Dead	46
Until There's A Cure	47
Weekly Writings	49
The Beat Without	58

Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: We are proud to introduce the writing of Coach Dee Reb's, a counselor in Alameda County Juvenile Hall, to the pages of The Beat Within. Hundreds of teens and thousands of young men have been educated by Coach Dee Reb's "school of thought" — both because of what he has to say and because of who's saying it. He commands respect, and he cares; so open your ears and feel the wisdom here.

Coach Dee Reb's Says

working in the hall is not a game
 working in the hall brings on a lot of pain
 to see where youngstas don't want to listen to a
 thing
 thinkin' it's all a game
 you do your best to talk everyday
 about a plan to stay out the way
 seems like it goes in one ear and out the next
 not stopping in between the ears to take a rest
 some think they can do it a different way
 not knowing it doesn't get better because you try a
 different way
 breaking god's law is the same everyday
 pay now or later is the only way
 breaking your people's hearts is not a good thing to
 do
 for what you do to others will indeed come back to
 you
 so i say — straighten up your life before you end up
 in the pen'
 watching your back and paying for your sins
Coach Dee Reb, 150 Crew Counselor

Running — Part Four

So I waited in the Hall, until a bed was opened up at the group home. When the staff came to my cell to get me, I was really happy! So I dressed out, and I was on my way.

As soon as I got back to the group home in Richmond, I looked for my clothes but could not find them — somebody had stolen my gear! So I was hella mad! But I stayed cool for one night, until the morning.

And when I woke up the next morning, I felt something was wrong. And I knew somebody had been talking about me when I sat down at the breakfast table. All I heard were whispers.

"What's up, y'all! What are you ninjas whispering about?" I asked. They all just stared at me. "Well, don't just stare at me! Tell me what the hell is going on?" I said.

This one cat got up out of his seat and looked at me and said, "My brother said his girlfriend said you were going to —!" Instantly, I shot up out of my seat.

"What the hell you mean, she said that! She don't live next door to my brother! I don't even know that girl!" I exclaimed. Now I was mad — then I noticed his pants! "Hey! You have my brand new pants on, dude! I just bought those before I ran. Take my damn pants off!"

Still he stared at me, daring eyes played into mine. "Nope. You left. So I took 'em, and you ain't gettingtng them back," he said, real slow like.

"Okay," I said. I walked to staff office and asked the staff, "May I please have my personals — my money, my jewelry and cell phone, please?" I asked.

"Are you planning on leaving, Vincent?" the staff asked me.

I said a simple but demanding, "Yes!" Ten minutes later, I had my clothes packed and was charging my cell phone. It was still activated, being that I had paid already for the first three months service.

After my cell was charged, two hours later, I called my homie. "Hey, Jay! Meet me at the Richmond BART station in about an hour and a half," I told my homie and hung up.

I set a duffel bag full of my clothes outside of the house on the porch, then walked up to dude that had my pants on. "So, are you going to take off my pants?" I asked him real polite.

"Naw, muthafunka, get up out my face!" he yelled in my face, spit flying out of his mouth and splattering my cheek.

"Step outside with me?" I asked him, and walked outside onto the front porch. As soon as he came out of the house, I hit him square in the jaw.

He snapped back and started screaming at me, "Hey! Why you do that? Why you hit me?" he asked through sobs.

"Because you didn't want to give me my pants. So keep them! And tell your brother to stop speaking on stuff he don't know." I picked up my duffel bag and bounced.

I took the bus to the BART station. When I got to the station, I called my homie back up. "Hey, Jay! Where you at?" I asked him.

"I am right around the corner; I'll be there in five minutes."

Five minutes went by, and Jay pulled up. "Let me drive, cous'!" I said.

"All right, V. Where your car at?" he asked, hopping out and jumping into the passenger's side.

"It's in front of my brother's house in East Oakland. We will drive over there, so I can pick up my ride," I say, and hop into the driver's seat.

We pull out of the BART station, and I hop on the freeway. Twenty minutes later, I am in my car on my way

to West Oakland to stop by my house.

When I got home, my sister was posted on the porch, smoking a Newport. "Hey, Vince! What you doing here?" she asked.

"Let me hit that cigarette," is all I said, and took the cancer stick out of her hand. I put it to my lips and took a long pull, looking at the white clouds and the blue sky. It was a good day to be home.

I went into the house and said hi to my stepmoms. "Boy? When will you stop running from these group homes?" she asked me.

"I ran because —"

She cut me off by saying, "No excuse! Just go put your stuff up."

Three days later, I called my probation officer. "Hi Mr. Xxxx, I am at home," I told him.

"Okay. Turn yourself in, and I promise you will be home on Monday on home supervision."

So, I turned myself in that day. Two days later, I was back at home. [To be continued.]

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You really give us a feel in your overall story and in its parts, including this one, for the complexities and complications that come up at different group home placements. The problem with running for good reasons, and for bad reasons, as well as for no reason — is that reasoning takes a back seat to running! And maybe that's why your stepmom said, "No excuse!" Yet sometimes there are good excuses! The problem arises when one is addicted to running, because a good reason then really does become just another excuse; even though a better excuse! An addict loves to be right, especially if it "excuses" his addiction. In part three of Running, you could have changed your mind at the last minute and stayed without repercussion. This time, you seemed to do the right thing; it also had a happy outcome — and that's almost all good. We say almost, because it doesn't answer your stepmom's important question: "When will you stop running from these group homes?" Thanks for another great piece from Running!

An Interview: JePeabo and Mr. Beardslee

Lil J: Hello Mr. Beardslee how are you feeling today

DB: I am feeling happy and generous

Lil J: Why are you feeling like that?

DB: Because I am getting away from my pain forever.

Lil J: But DB what pains you so bad

DB: I have been brain damaged for a long time and I have committed two heinous murders and I feel very bad for the family of the victims.

Lil J: Well that's unquestionably and without a doubt the hardest thing to deal with, especially with a disease like that.

DB: I know that, and also I have repent for all the wrongdoings that I have done and I have asked for amnesty.

Lil J: I am glad that you have done a very mature thing, because most of the murders nowadays don't care about the family of victims, nor do they have paralyzing diseases, especially ones that deal with the brain.

DB: Lil J you are a very respectable young man, I admire your courage and integrity.

Lil J: DB, I must admit I have a newfound respect for a man of your stature. Can you give me some advice?

DB: Learn to respect yourself first and foremost, then respect everyone around you. Lastly and greatest of all, find Jesus and let him into your heart because he is the Saviour and the Almighty God.

Lil J: Thank you Mr. Donald Beardslee

DB: You're welcome Lil J

-JePeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A wonderfully imaginative and compassionate interview, JePeabo. We wish the real Donald Beardslee could have seen this.

El Motivo De Mi Vida

Hola, mi nombre es Margen y el motivo que me gusta vivir es porque tengo una abuelita que espero que algún día la vaya a volver a ver. Todo los motivos que tengo para seguir viviendo es que tengo un hijo.

Pienso dejar la calle cuando salga y buscar un trabajo porque la vida es muy bonita, y quisiera ver crecer a mi hijo, quien es la razón por la cual quiero seguir viviendo.

La otra razón de vivir es porque tengo una abuelita quien es una de las personas que más quiero en esta vida. Ella fue quien me dió techo, comida, y me dio estudio por mucho tiempo. La amo a mi abuelita Cecilia.

La otra razón es porque tengo a mi madre viva y sé que algún día va ocupar de mí y por esa razón es por quien quiero vivir. Le doy gracias a Dios por darme 16 años de vida, que es la edad que tengo.

Gracias a Dios por darme una familia tan bella y por darme unos hermanos tan bellos, a quienes algún día quisiera verlos triunfar con orgullo. Ojalá que no sean unos vagos como yo.

A todos mis homies, les digo que piensen diferente porque un bloque nunca le va dar lo que realmente es bueno. A todos mis homies de mi pandilla, les saludo y que siempre recoradre los ratos que pase con ellos. También les digo que piensen en sus familias primero. Cuidense.

-Margen B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Que escritura tan linda, tan dedicativa y tan honesta. Esta super bien que pienses en las personas quienes te han dado todo, quienes estaran contigo en las buenas y en las malas. No saben cuanto se merecen ellas de tu apollo, de tu amor y de tu presencia. Si tanto amas a estas personas, la solución de parar el sufrimiento tal como el de ellos y el tuyo es portandote bien y siendo lo que realmente tienes que ser, un persona responsable. Tienes una gran familia, cosa que no todos tienen. Si supieras cuantos niños abandonados, muriendose de hambre, sin familiares, y mas ahora que estamos en guerra. Tú tienes a tu familia y deberias de apreciarla.

What Makes My Life Worth Living

Hello, my name is Margen and what makes my life worth living is I have a grandmother who one day I hope to see again. Also, another reason why my life is worth living is because I have a son.

When I get out, I plan to leave the streets alone and find myself a job because life is beautiful, and I would like to see my son grow up. He is the reason why I want to keep living.

The other reason why I want to continue living is because I have a grandmother who is one of the people I love the most in this life. She was the one who gave me a roof over my head, food, and for a short period of time, she even schooled me. I love my grandma, Cecilia.

The other reason is because I have a mother who is alive and I know that someday she's going to need my help, and for that very same reason, I want to continue living for her. I give thanks to God for having given me 16 years of life. That's how old I am.

Thank you God for having given me such a wonderful family and for giving me some beautiful brothers whom someday I would like to see prosper in life because that will make me very proud of them. Hopefully they don't grow up to be some gangsters like me.

To all my homies, I tell them to start to think differently, because a block is never going to give them what is truly good. To all my homies from my gang, I salute you all and I'll always remember the moments I spent with you all. Also, I want to tell you all to think about your families first. Take care of yourselves.

-Margen B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a beautiful, touching, and honest piece! That's hella good that you think about the people who have given you everything, and who'll be with you during good times and bad times. You don't know how much they're deserving of your support, of your love, and your presence. If you really love those people so much, the solution to ending their suffering is to behave yourself and do what you really need to do, and that means becoming a responsible person. You have a loving family and that's something that not everyone has. If you only knew how many abandoned kids there are in this world, dying of hunger, without family members, and even more so now that we're at war. You have your family and you should appreciate each and every single member of your family.

Broken Glass

From where I am standing, it is like looking into the world from behind a piece of glass; watching as people of all colors lead everyday lives. Seen through my eyes, things nobody else can or will ever see.

I wish to be a part of all this — out of the world behind glass. As I stand here with hands and nose pressed up against the glass, like a little child in a candy store, I consider my options. What can I do to get to the other side of this glass?

I see a car pass, filled with girls, a man walking his dog, and a little boy with an ice cream cone. I watch an old guy sitting on his porch, and a mother rocking her baby to sleep on a park bench. So much going on — that I am missing out on! What will I do to get to the other side?

A pretty girl walks by and pauses to smile at me. She waves at me and motions with one finger to — “Come here.” I take a step towards her and run right into this glass! Damn! — She loses her smile and walks away, glancing back over her shoulder as she continues down the street.

Man, oh man! How I wish to be on the other side, which looks so promising, and stressless. Again I consider my options. Should I try to climb over the glass? There goes! A door over there, to the side! Should I try that? Let's see ... well, it's locked. So ... hmmm. What can I do?

Ah-hah! Look! Here is a rock. I will use it to break the glass. Then I shall be free! Yes! I can taste it — freedom! And it tastes good! So I take the rock and throw it at the glass. It bounces off without even cracking it, let alone shattering it. Damn!

I melt to the floor and sit, hands over my eyes — when I hear a crashing noise and peak from behind my hands. Glass is raining down on me! The barrier has been broken — broken glass!

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say it is always darkest before the dawn, and your story seems to illustrate that meaning. Just as you melt to the floor in despair, the goal of your effort is realized! Actually, your story illuminates a truth about work as well. So often we choose only to work with the expectation of immediate results. Yet more often, the most important work is done long in advance of harvesting the fruit of one's labor. Perhaps time is an illusion anyway, at least from the point of view of the man showered with broken glass — for he embraces the present moment wholeheartedly! In reality, now is all any of us has, locked as we are in the confines of time and space, along with the work we choose to do, to break through to freedom! Your catalogue of everyday people living in the moment, is most impressive (Read Whitman's "Song of Myself" yet?!) Props!

**I hear a crashing
noise and peak
from behind my
hands. Glass is
raining down
on me**

Dear Judge Mahoney

The first thing I want to say is I know I have made several mistakes. But since last September, I have tried hard to improve and to do the right things. The improvements that I made may not look like much to some people, but they were not easy, and I did do a lot to change and be good.

One of the main things that I did do was improve at home to stop worrying my dad. I came home every night. I stopped sneaking out after he went to bed. And I did not run away any more. Some nights I was late, but I always called him and told him where I was, and that I was coming home.

I also made up my mind to be serious about school and drugs. I made all my appointments to enroll in school and the drug program.

If I get a chance, I can start to school at Everett now. I also put a stop to breaking into people's cars, which was a big problem, and one that was not easy to stop because of my friends.

-Lil' F B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We know what you mean when you say these efforts to better yourself may not look like much to people who don't understand what you're going through, but to us they look like a real decision to change the way you were living for a chance to do right in the future. That's all anyone can ask, and we see these efforts for the tremendous accomplishment they are. Of course, we have to ask, if you are making these great strides, what brought you back to the hall — and what further efforts will you have to make to stay out? Have you already had your day in court? If not, we hope you show this to your lawyer so he or she can show it to the judge. We don't know if it will help or not, but we know it won't hurt!

No More

No more playing games

No more thug it on the block

No more smoke that green

No more wear that green in YGC (B4)

No more selling dope to make the green

No more doing time

No more eye for eye, because you win, but only today

No more telling my mom I don't care

No more not going to school

No more saying no more because it's time to do it

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: No more is right — no more violence on the street is what we all want. So why do some of us do it? And why do others of us — like you — see that this life leads to a dead end and that your own choices can make the difference. We admire you so much, Lil' D, for having the blinders removed from your eyes and being able to communicate what you see. Thank you for this, and for all your writing!

**How can you live
in a house with
at least thirty
rooms, and then
drive past the
homeless and
not think twice
about their
situation?**

Dear Mr. President

My 'hood is still messed up. I still see the same homeless dope fiends searching the streets for the next hit or pocket to run through. Didn't you say that you would make this hell called America a better place? I don't see it.

Why do I get put in jail for doing the same thing you do, if not less? I've robbed people to eat without harming them, but you go to another culture, kill and rob them for power.

One more thing before I'm finished. How can you live in a house with at least thirty rooms, and then drive past the homeless and not think twice about their situation? How can there be a lottery for millions of dollars and can't spare a dollar to the less fortunate? Whenever you can give me an answer write back.

-Dre B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a great letter, Dre, even though we advise you not to hold your breath waiting for an answer. You're right. There are so many people in jails and prisons in this country whose crimes don't come close to the level of killing (and torture) that our government is engaged in around the world. Your last paragraph, in particular, asks powerful questions that we also would like to know the answer to. But we're not holding our breath, either!

As The clock Winds Down

(Facing Execution)

Tic-toc-tic-toc-tic

My life is gone

Tic-toc-tic-toc-tic

Gone

Tic-toc-tic-toc-tic

Dazed, mesmerized

My mind is not in its place

I just pray to my God

Hoping He saved me a place

Tic-toc-tic-toc

My life is gone

Tic-toc-tic-toc

Gone

Tic-toc-tic-toc

Life is gone

Too much all in one place

A global world

This I cannot face

Tic-toc-tic

My life is gone

Tic-toc-tic

Gone

Tic-toc-tic

I'm sorry for what I did

I wish, I regret — both those things

I cannot do

Tic-toc

My life is gone

Tic-toc

Gone

Tic-toc

Gandhi

Tic-toc

An eye for an eye

Tic-toc

Will leave the whole world blind

Tic

That's my time

-Eric B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Very, very deep piece. You took this topic and faced it as squarely as we've seen by placing yourself in the shoes of Donald Beardslee. Can you imagine what Donald Beardslee was feeling? Thinking? We love the last part of this tight poem, remembering Gandhi's words about the consequences of a society built on the concept of "an eye for an eye." Well done.

Bruised But Not Broken

Well, there are a lot of things that have hurt me in my life, but I'm going to talk about the most hurting things that have caused the most pain in my life.

One thing that really hurt me was when me and my friends were walking back to the block. As we were getting closer, one of our so-called friends pulled out a .22 pistol and started shooting at us. One of the bullets went right past my face into the telephone pole while all the other shots hit my friends, which led to one murder. The others were just injured.

And the cause for the shooting was stupid. He said that he thought my friend that he killed had raped his mother, which was so damn stupid because my ninja barely even talked to his mother. But from what my other friend saw was that his mother acted funny every time he came over to his house.

After he shot at us he went to his house and asked his mom if he did that and she said no. After my friend was lying down face first in the gutter. And not to say that my friend that he killed had a baby due in less than a month.

The reason that hurts me so much is because he was like my brother. We always hung out with each other, spent the night at each other's house, used to pull females and just go dumb. Did all kinds of things together. Just had hella fun growing up with each other.

The other thing that hurts me a lot is how my mom was a drug addict. The most hurtful thing of this is how she neglected and then abandoned me and my sisters and brothers. My mother left me and my sisters and brothers for days with our newborn brother who was the youngest of all of the kids. When I did live with my mother, she used to go out at night and come back early in the morning and sleep all day. We took care of ourselves while she was away. But don't get me wrong. She was a good mother when she didn't let the drugs take over which was very often.

But what I don't get is many people, well should I say a few people in my family, think I'm not supposed to love my mother, a woman who abandoned and neglected her kids. When I was young I felt extremely sad for my mother because of the outcome of things that she did to herself.

To this day as I think back, I see her as a victim of a man-made "drug."

Well, before I forget, let me get back on what some of the family members were talking about not loving my mother because of her neglecting us and abandoning us.

Well, I'm the type of human that if my mother did something that hurt me I will forgive her every time because she might have done something that hurt me and then I didn't forgive her and she passes away. Then I'm going to have to live with that hurt deep down inside of not forgiving my mother. That will hurt me until I'm gone off this earth. So that's why I forgive my mother every time she has hurt me in my life. Never know when somebody's time is up to leave this earth. That's my reason for forgiving.

And they say what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger. The things my mother hurt me with, doing all the things I wrote about and what happened, that shhh did not make me stronger. It just showed me that my mother let a drug high that lasts only for so long come first before her kids. It didn't kill me physically but it killed me mentally and left me emotionally scarred.

-Toot, San Mateo

From The Beat: We learned a lot about you from this extraordinary piece. But the characteristic that stands out most in you is your wisdom. You seem to have been through a whole lot and we know from experience that usually the more stuff you've been through the bigger your heart is. And consequently, the more wise you become. Has the criticism about you loving your mother stopped? Or do your family members still give you a hard time? Going through what you've been through while keeping a good head on your shoulders is a true testament to how courageous and durable you are. Your willingness to forgive, like Jesus, places you on a moral plane well above most of the people we know, in or out of the halls. Our only hope is that your already mature mind will continue to grow so that it can become contagious and others will think like you.

My Life

My life. Let me tell you about my life. You say I have a good life, getting beat up all my life, having to have sex for money? Having to think, "What am I going to do about food, like, am I going to eat?"

And you say I have a good life. Or how about this? Your mom selling you for drugs so she can feel better, or your mom throwing you out on the street when you are seven years old, say, to go get some money so she can get drugs.

And you say I have a good life, getting raped by your mom, your dad, your brother, cousin. Your mom making you go down on her at the age of six, seven and eight, and you say I have a good life.

How about getting taken by cops at eleven years old, getting shot at and getting raped by the staff in a group home, and you say I got a good life.

But, you know what? I do have a good life, because I am still standing 'til this day. I am still alive. I'm still me. I'm still a good person and can't nobody change me.

-Diamond D, Marin

From The Beat: You have incredible spirit, Diamond D, but you've got to get away from your family. Do you have any relatives you can stay with whom you trust? Can you still go to school, get a part-time job and help whomever with some small money to help buy some food, pay the rent? Do you have any friends with families you can stay with until you're old enough to be on your own? What are your legal options? Do you want to finish high school? Go to college? Have you talked to the psych tech in Juvy and/or a counselor you can confide in for some immediate help?

**Your mom selling
you for drugs
so she can feel
better, or your
mom throwing
you out on the
street when you
are seven years
old, say, to go get
some money so
she can
get drugs.**

What Are We?

What are we? I mean are we thugs, gangstas or what? We say we or a lot of thing, but what really are we? Teens that sell drugs? What are we? Teens that smoke drugs? What are we? Teens that do time in YGC? What are we? That ninja that stand on a block?

What are we? Teens that need help because we can't do it by ourselves. We are lost and need help to find ourselves. That's what we are, so stop calling us all the other things, and start giving us help!

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Lil' Dakota, we can always count on you for a good piece of writing. Just to answer your questions, you are a human being that is striving to absorb all the knowledge you can, and striving to become someone in the future. And you are right, you (we?) all need help. But are some of y'all ready to take the help that you are given? We know you are, Dakota, but are your peers? How can those who are still not ready get ready? What's your advice to them to make them see what you now see so clearly?

Until There Js A Cow

Four legged disease ridden meat producing animal
Chew! Chew! Consume!
Fatter!

Congregate masturbate hump your cousin
Screw! Screw! Propagate!
Wider!

Sleep all day party all nighttime
Dance! Dance! Jump!
Faster!

We are the cows
We are the complacent
We are the cows of the world
We are the livestock of humanity

-Drusilla, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We can only imagine the experiences you have had to give you such a debased and negative view of humanity! We're not sure we agree with your assessment (sometimes we feel like complacent cows, sometimes we feel like crusading heroes — and mostly we feel somewhere in between), but we are sure that you can craft a deep, though disturbing, idea into a fine literary form in so few words! Now, what plans do you have for your own life so that you become the shepherd and not the sheep?

I Would Cure Addiction

Wow! There are so many things to choose from. I would say a problem I would try to cure would be addiction. Addiction is one of the world's biggest problems — in my point of view that is. Addiction causes so many deaths. One example is people will do anything just to get another high and don't think of the consequences. Some things they do are scandalous, like robbing and killing. They'll do anything.

Another reason why I would cure addiction is because the kids can come out with birth defects and major health problems. Another reason why addiction is bad is because it is so hard to quit. People think it's easy but they just don't know. Well, that is why I think I would cure addiction. Hopefully the world would be more peaceful. To all my addicts, stay clean.

-Funk-E, San Mateo

From The Beat: We are so glad you said you would cure addiction because clinically speaking addiction isn't just a 'problem' it is a disease — an incurable one. How has this disease affected your life in particular? What would the world look like if your cure became a reality?

On Other Side Of The Door

On the other side of the door
I have no freedom and no worries.
I have a good life
and I never let someone break my smile
On the other side of the door
There is no YTEC, no probation, no group home, and
I am finally free
I am clean and sober and too cool for drugs
On the other side of the door
There is no rejection; everything is my way because I
feel I'm the boss.
On the other side of the door
I fear no evil and seek no danger
I am on my way to college and searching for a degree
I am struggling for success,
and reality is I will make it
On the other side of the door
I will be myself, I will try my best, and I will live life
to the fullest
On the other side of the door
I have freedom and no worries

-Princess YTEC, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We can see from this piece, and from much that you write, that you are already halfway through that door. You've already got one foot on the other side, and the rest of you will soon follow. Great work, Princess. We usually challenge the phrase, "live life to the fullest" because it can mean so many different (and contradictory) things. But in the context of this piece, we understand it and we applaud it. Go for it!

I Would Cure Addiction

Wow! There are so many things to choose from. I would say a problem I would try to cure would be addiction. Addiction is one of the world's biggest problems — in my point of view that is. Addiction causes so many deaths. One example is people will do anything just to get another high and don't think of the consequences. Some things they do are scandalous, like robbing and killing. They'll do anything.

Another reason why I would cure addiction is because the kids can come out with birth defects and major health problems. Another reason why addiction is bad is because it is so hard to quit. People think it's easy but they just don't know. Well, that is why I think I would cure addiction. Hopefully the world would be more peaceful. To all my addicts, stay clean.

-Funk-E, San Mateo

From The Beat: We are so glad you said you would cure addiction because clinically speaking addiction isn't just a 'problem' it is a disease — an incurable one. How has this disease affected your life in particular? What would the world look like if your cure became a reality?

**We are lost and
need help to
find ourselves.**

Beat Interview With Weasel

TBW: What have you been thinking about, Weasel? What's on your mind? What's been going on down here at the Ranch?

W: Do you mean, what if the Ranch gets sold? I think that if it gets sold and this place gets shut down, that kids who need a last chance will not be able to have that opportunity. Other places will start charging for warehousing and it will be expensive to have juveniles from San Francisco and other counties.

TBW: What if they decide to build the Ranch up again?

W: Such as remodeling? If they build up this place, remodeling will be an issue. First of all, I don't think they want to spend the money, take the time, to rebuild this place, because if that was the case, it could have been done.

They have been fixing up some necessary stuff, stuff that was required to be fixed. We're not just talking about buildings, we're talking about programs and activities for the kids who come through this facility.

TBW: Do you have any new programs at the Ranch?

W: No, we don't. The only program that has been new since I've been here is Entrepreneurs, but I've never been to that class. I take Writer's Corps, a class where you do writing activities, such as poetry, short stories, whatever is stressing me out. That program is based on what the person wants it to be.

TBW: What have you heard about future plans for the Ranch?

W: Around last August we were promised new programs by November, by the director. He didn't say what the programs were going to be, but they never showed up. When it was brought to the director's attention, he acted as if he never said it. We had a little discussion one night from 8:30 to 8:40. It was so short because, basically, he didn't want to hear what we had to say.

TBW: Do you have an organization to represent y'all?

W: The director suggested that we all get together to start a campaign and in this campaign, we would elect a president along with a vice president. This was set up to have somebody to speak for everybody at the Ranch. When the organization did go through, we elected a president and vice president. Our president tried to do whatever was in his power, which was very little, to try to help us to get new programs and the privileges—this little scheme went down for only a month, then everything fell apart.

TBW: Why?

W: We've had a few meetings with the director about the privileges and programs we were trying to get. I never really attended most of them because I didn't want to put up with the director and his denials, and he was the one who set this up. It turned out that everything that he told us to do, we did, but he didn't fulfill his part. After the month, everything broke apart. He promised us meetings that never took place.

TBW: What else is going on down here?

W: People have been talking really bad about the Ranch. I'm not gonna lie, I too once talked bad about the Ranch, but that was before I really knew what was going on. See, we got counselors up here, some are really good, but three that I have in mind are not good, and everything they do or say or whatever, or don't do, falls up on the image of this place. What I didn't understand back then

is that it's not the place that's bad or the environment, but it's the people who are so-called running this place.

TBW: What kinds of things are going wrong?

W: First, programs were promised. There's never a way to talk to the director who is running this place, because every time we do talk to him about something, he says he's going to look into it, but he never does. But we can only bring these matters to the table, but it's up to someone to do something about them.

(To be continued.)

-Weasel LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You do a really good job of explaining the problems at the Ranch. If the director won't listen to y'all about these problems, maybe he will read your thoughtful comments and criticisms, and realize that he has the power to make things better. Do you agree with those who say that San Francisco authorities are deliberately not sending many youth to the Ranch because they want to argue it's not cost effective so they can sell the land to developers? Given the current state of affairs, would you rather be at the Ranch than at a group home, or program like ROP, or the hall, or CYA? Even though you'd rather be home, do you think the Ranch as a good place to get a break from the stress and danger of the streets, kick back, go to school, play basketball, swim in the summertime, lift weights, etc.? If you were director, what are the first things you would do to make the program better?

Tears Of A Poet

Smoking a chop
Drinking on Bacardi
Lil' young ninja
One a late-night hype
Looking for a party
Late night thievin'
Only fifteen
But that's how he's breathin'
Never had the life of luxury or fame
Instead he lived his life of misery
Fear and pain
All the tears he shed
That slowly disappeared
Throughout the years
Looking for love and affection
He went toward the wrong direction
Hiding behind masks
Of different expressions
No one but he knows
What goes on
Dealing with his incarceration
While he's feeling depressed
He's gon' through too much stress
At times he feels death at his side
Feelin' like he can't decide
Behind his eyes
Are walls made of steel
That hold his tears back
Because it's hard for him to feel
I can't find them behind my eyes
Or rolling down my cheeks
So I get them out
The only way I can
And that's through these streets
These are the tears of a poet

-Weasel LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The streets are not your only means to release your tears, Weasel. You do it beautifully (and painfully) through your poetry. You're a wonderful poet. Your honesty lets your readers feel your pain, though not why you're feeling it. What is messing with you, haunting you? The streets? Your family? Girls? School? What is causing you so much pain? What can you do, when you get out, to change your situation? Do you want to change it — because desiring the change is the first necessary step to making it. You deserve some real happiness. Can you find a way to shed a lifestyle that brings so much pain?

Yo Cambiaría Las Guerras

Si yo fuera Dios, yo cambiaría las guerras, quitaría las pandillas, ayudaría a las personas que necesitan adonde vivir, que comer comer, a los niños que viven en las calles y trataría de hacer que las personas se quieran unos a otros para que no andan engañándose entre si.

Haría que creyeran en Dios para que les ayude a salir de lo malo, que tengan tengan fe en él para que los salvara de todo lo malo que le puede pasar a uno.

También haría que los chavos salieran de la jvenile. Un saludo muy cariñoso a todos.

Yo vine aqui por las pandillas que pertenecía. Ando mi placaso en la espalda, pero yo prometi a mi mamá que esta en el cielo que ya no voy a ser nada malo para que mi Dios Jesus de Nazaret me saqué de aqui. Me iban deportar, pero me van a dar papeles para quedarme en este país y por eso creo en Dios, el todo poderoso.

Les deja un saludo su amigo y ex-pandillero. Ay, me disculpan, pero ya no quiero hacer lo malo. Gracias y un saludo a mi pais hermoso, Honduras. Te quiero Honduras, lugar de mis raices.

From The Beat: Eres una de las personas que este mundo necesita para acabar con tantos sufrimientos en este mundo. Sabias que tienes un gran don, en preocuparte por los demás. Nunca cambie esta manera de pensar. En otra mano, nos parece maravilloso los pasos que estas tomando y la promesa que le hicistes a Dios y a tu madre. Estamos seguro que esa fe en Dios fue lo que te ayudó y te ayudará. No sólo te ayudó sino que te dió la oportunidad de tener papeles legales para que puedas hacer de tu vida algo. Sólo te queremos dar un consejo que te ayudará mucho en tu vida: aveces cuando estamos muy solos, en situaciones como la tuya, nosotros le pedimos a Dios, hacemos promesas de no hacer las cosas y la mayoría que lo han hecho y se le ha condesido el deseo, han quebrado sus promesas. Ellos cuando estan afuera se olvidan de las promesa y a Dios no le gusta eso. Si prometistes algo, tienes que cumplirlo. Si en verdad estas pensando en cambiar, no sabes lo feliz que puedes hacer, no sabes cuantas cosas maravillosas hay afuera esperando por ti, y cuantas buenas experiencias te esperan. Buena suerte.

If I Were God

If I were God, I would change the wars, I would get rid of gangs, I would help out those who need a place to live, those who need something to eat, the kids who live out on the streets, and I would try make people love one another so they don't run around deceiving one another or trying to get over on the next person.

I would make them believe in God so I could help rid them of their bad habits so they can have faith in me so that whenever something bad happens to them, they know they can turn to me and I'll hear them out.

Also, I would release all the juveniles from Juvenile Halls. I want to send a warm shout-out to everyone.

I came in here because of the gang I belonged to. I got my tattoo on my back, but I promised my mother who is up in heaven, that I am no longer going to do anything that is bad so that my Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, helps me get out of here. They were going to deport me, but instead they're going to give me my papers so I can stay in this country, and that's why I believe in God, who truly is almighty.

All right you all, another shout-out goes out to you all, this time from your friend and ex-gangbanger. Damn, please forgive me, but I don't want to do any more bad things. Thank you and a shout-out goes out to my beautiful country, Honduras. I love you Honduras, home of my roots.

-Catracho, Marin

From The Beat: The world needs more people like you so we can end all the suffering that's going on. Did you know you have a huge gift, which is the ability to actually care about your fellow man/woman? We hope you never change the way you think. On the other hand, we think it's wonderful the steps you're taking and the promise that you made with God and your mother. We're positive that your faith in God was what helped you out and will continue to help you out in life. Not only did He help you out, but he also gave you the opportunity to get your papers and become a legal resident of this country, which will help you out a lot in life. Sometimes when we're alone, in situations like the one you find yourself in, we ask God for help, and we promise not to do things. Let's face it: the majority of us have done this, but once the deed we wished for happens, we forget about the promises we made. Most of you all, when you all are back on the outs, you forget about the promises you all made, and God does not like this. If you promise something, you have to fulfill it. If you truly are thinking about changing, you have no clue how happy you could be and you have no idea how many wonderful things are waiting on the outs for you, and also how many nice experiences await you on the road of life. Good luck to you and thank you for your piece.

Time

how can you measure time
how can you put a time to a crime
two years equals two hours of bad
and after so many years
time drives you mad
how can you give a man life
for a second of pain
when it comes to time
there's nothing to gain
time is a big word to me
time has driven men to insanity
einstein was right
about the concept of time
maybe we should consider it
before the next crime
there's nothing as strong
as the hands of time
no children deserve it
no matter how heinous the crime
but when you die
time's just wasted away
and when in a rush
not enough hours in a day
when time gets short
the thread gets weak
and out of nowhere
you develop a leak
as my time grows near
there's a part of me that fears
what lies ahead for me in the future
if i had a chance
it's grandfather time
i would capture
how can you put a time on a crime
how can you measure time
someone tell me how to break
the hands of time

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Become lost in the labor with no eye toward its fruit, do the right thing 'cause it's the right thing to do. Forget about threats from power, promises or encouragements — and don't count the hours. In your own little mystical bubble of saintly conviction, don't offer a crumb to their lingering suspicion. If you've been bending the rules 'cause the way they play isn't cool — stop bending right now! No more resistance from here on out. Just for the moment, be a saint, lift your eyes beyond troubles and complaints — learn how to take pride in standing apart from the hustlers and ballers and game-playing arts. Don't blow it all when you've come this far. Your thinking's still twisted, so reach for the sky and pursue impossible perfection for a little while — just give it a try. And when you're free, look up at clock and smile. When you've arm-wrestled time and won, the hardest part is done. Don't break weak before the dawn.

**Yo vine aqui por las pandillas
que pertenecía. Ando mi
placaso en la espalda, pero yo
prometi a mi mamá que esta
en el cielo que ya no voy a ser
nada malo para que mi Dios
Jesus de Nazaret me
saqué de aqui**

Me

My lyrical skills are divine
 I'll have yo' mind in a bind,
 I'm one of a kind wit' an intelligent mind
 A benefit to all mankind, watch the signs,
 I'm goin' to college to stack the paper,
 Stayin' away from bad people and haters
 All my needs I'ma cater and take care of my stuff
 If you were in my shoes yo' life would be rough
 Some try to act tough drinkin' Duff
 Like Homer Simpson, but always get caught slippin'
 They trippin' tryin' to be on the block
 An' that ain't right. Some will never reach the light
 Instead of lookin' fo' freedom they lookin' fo' a fight
 Just to catch anotha case, end up gettin' maced
 An did you feel out a place
 But that's neva gonna be me
 I try to see every opportunity to be all I can be
 On the other hand I'll be takin' yo' money
 Chillin' wit' yo' homies, bouncin' like a bunny
 From spot to spot, block to block,
 but neva slangin' rocks
 I try to do the right thing for everything I get
 Stayin' too legit to quit, haters throwin' fits
 'Cause they wanna see me down, always quick to
 clown
 However it sound I neva mess around
 I stay on my toes wearin' clean clothes

-Joe, San Mateo

From The Beat: If you know what you have to do, why does anyone else matter? Whose feelings are to the side and whose are you putting on a platter? It's hard to stay focused when other people are paying too much attention. But only you can change you — you're responsible for your redemption. So keep up the good work and try not to get discouraged by what others do. For you've got too much to lose to have anything to prove.

A Conversation

With The Almost Dead

60 minutes of living and along with your death
 So let's talk, and take a deep breath
 Please, do tell me all, and a simple request:
 Can I deliver a message
 So at peace you shall rest?
 Forget all the mess
 It's nothin' but a pest
 All that matters is that you opened up and
 confessed
 Truth of a man
 Nothing less
 God has made a path for you
 Truth
 You passed the test
 RIP

-Anthony, San Mateo

From The Beat: You took this in a direction that we didn't expect, using your opportunity to talk to someone whose execution is imminent in order to ask if there's anything you can do for him or her. That ability to empathize, to seek to alleviate another's suffering, is a touching sign of maturity.

Not Catching AIDS

If I could cure any disease it would be AIDS. I would cure AIDS because I wouldn't have to worry about getting a death sentence every time I'm getting' some booty. The way I would go about getting' rid of AIDS is I would make it mandatory for everyone to get tested and if they get tested positive for AIDS they would have to get a permadot on their inner thigh to allow people who want to have sex with them to know why they have AIDS.

That way no one will get AIDS without knowing. That way when you about to hit somethin' and you take off his (or her) pants you just look down and if they got that permadot, no booty for you. I have had some experiences where I had intercourse with a girl a I barely knew (but wore a condom) and when I was done, the whole next day I be thinkin' to myself, did she have somethin', did I catch it? But then I wouldn't think nothin' of it after I smoke a blunt or two.

-Beeze, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a really good idea, Beeze, and shows creativity and savvy. Do you think people would follow it (Lastly, Ever wonder how many people let their lives slip by because they "forgot" about their problems after a blunt or two?)

Cold 'Hood Livin', That's How It Go

it's cold like you outside wit' you shirt off and nowhere to go
 feel me this lil kese and i'm gon' shine till my heart stop straight up
 mama gone out my life my ninja i'm at my limit
 not caring 'cause that's how it go feel me
 keep it solid till you break an' when you break you die
 keep yo' head up that's all i can tell you
 'cause if you don't you gon' get caught slippin'
 that's how it go get yo' money how you live
 quarters halves ounces zips cars
 can't let it get to you or you gon' get caught slippin'
 that's how it go the solid and smart survive
 but you could get the whole clip let off on you
 laying on the block bloody crying help damn near dead
 'cause that's how it go straight up
 i'm from a 'hood where my ninjas grow up solid
 when i was eight years old my bra was doing his thang
 in the 'hood on some shhh that i'm on right now feel me
 i found a tech nine in my toy box at eight years old
 pointin' that mutha around now i'm fourteen years old
 my bra got popped and i'm followin' his footsteps
 but on some big shhh at fourteen on a whole 'nutha one
 feel me that's how it go

-Lil' Kese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is really one of the saddest pieces we've ever read, to hear your brain so toxic with the same 'hood sickness that killed your brother — infected from the day that eight-year-old you found your brother's tech nine in your toybox! So sad and tragic. And no, it doesn't have to go that way, and you don't have to go that way. Maybe it's a blessing you're locked up a minute to think, 'cause the thinking you lay down here has got the stink of death — like some kind of volunteer to die next.

**I would make it
 mandatory for
 everyone to get
 tested**

Hasta Que Haya Una Cura (Until There Is A Cure)

Simon, camarones (guys), hasta que tenga una cura para mi vida, voy a poder descansar. (When I find a cure for my life, I will be able to rest.)

Don't get me wrong, homies, out there on the streets and locked up, I mean until I find a way to stay out of the system and find peace within myself, deep inside my heart, especially emotionally.

Well, let me share a piece of my life pretty quickly. I don't have much time, but I am Frank. I'm seventeen years old and I've been on lock-up most of my life. My family always tells me, "You spend more of your time inside than outside."

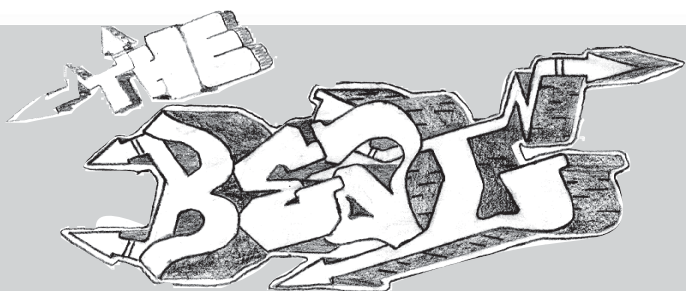
To tell you the truth, I don't know much about life, only the way I grew up. It's my style to spend most of my free time on the street. While I was out, I didn't do much except rob people and do drugs, 'specially drink my life away, which I was doing. If it wasn't for God, who put me in jail for a year, I would have been doing life by now, or dead with the rest of my friends. I don't blame no one, now that I matured up, before I blamed the world for it. But now I took it as a time to change my life around and do something different, instead of running the streets with a gang who ain't with you when you're locked up. Have you ever thought about it, the homies who always said they would be there with you are out there chilling, doing the same thing over and over? Hey, some might write here and there, but that's it, but the rest can't wait 'til you get out and bring you back down to their level.

Do yourself a favor, camaron, don't go back to the same old thing. Like a saying says, "Don't feed the demons you already know, challenge yourself and do something different, make your jefes proud of you homies and homegirls. I know it feels good to be out there throwing parties, but wake up, dogs, and move on. That shhh ain't going to take you anywhere. Get an education and don't give up or listen to what others have to say. They ain't going to put food in your stomach when you're hungry.

You are making wise choices from now on. There's people out there who care about you, even if you don't think so. Make a difference in yourself and offer help. If they don't take it, don't trip, at least you offered, that's all that matters in God's eyes. So like I said before, don't stop 'til you find a cura for yo' life. Well, later. Staff want to take my pencil already, or I would have written a book for y'all. Take care. Much love.

-Frank, Marin

From The Beat: Excellent writing and thinking. It sounds like you've learned a lot and have gathered a lot of wisdom from your life on the streets, Frank. We're so glad to hear that you have learned that it solves nothing to hurt and rob people. What decisions have you made about your life? If you were released today, would you continue to use drugs, drink, and rob people, or do you think you can go to your family for support? You sound like an honest person with a good heart who needs help to build the life you truly want to live. Maybe next time you can write about how you are going to leave the streets and system behind.



I Remember

When I roll with the homeboys and I see them fall
It affects me in my dreams 'cause I can still hear
them call

I remember one night we were rollin' in the 'hood
Strapped up in the cuts playin' cat and mouse
Predators in a chase gettin' ready to pounce
I remember like it was yesterday

It was my second mission, my homeboy passed
away We jumped out of the ride —

Gang banging is what we do best ride on the
opposite side —

And lay them to rest; I was getting down with this
hyna And my homeboy shouted my name

Those where the last words he said before the
streets claimed his fame

I remember the blood and the look in his eyes
Two shots to the head. It still seems like a lie

-Nena, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a chilling piece to read, and try to imagine what you were going through as you looked into your homeboy's dying eyes! Has this experience changed anything about the way you live your life? You say that gangbanging is what you do best, but then you describe this terrible consequence (not to mention the consequence of imprisonment). For us, that would be enough to set our feet on a different path. Is it enough for you?

**To tell you the truth,
I don't know much
about life, only the
way I grew up.**

Opening A Daycare Center

I would love to open up my own daycare because I love kids. I love to teach them the best I can. When I was on the outs I would always take care of all my home girls' kids. They all love me as well.

It's too bad now that I have to be in a placement, and I can't be there for the kids I baby-sit. It makes me sad. When I get out, I'm gonna get back to the same thing.

I would open up my own daycare in Pittsburgh because that's where I was baby sitting at. All of the kids I would baby sit had parents that don't care about them, so I would have to be there. I would rent a house and open it up in my house.

I would want my mom and my best friend to come work with me. My mom because she loves kids as well as me. She is also very good with kids. I would want my best friend to come work with me because she's the one that introduced me to all the kids.

I really enjoy kids. It's always been my dream to work with kids, so I hope and pray that my dream comes true.

-Jennifer, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is a dream that you can make come true, and it would be a great contribution to many, many children if it did come true. What do you have to do to get to that point where this could become a reality? What does your mother think about this business idea? What would you call your Daycare Center?

My Cell

my cell is cold
as ice in the arctic
freezing me into
molding my skin numb
my cell is small
a cage with four white walls
confining me inside
away from the physical freedom i deserve
my cell is lonely
with just me and my walls
no one to talk to
but myself and these walls
my cell smells of
dry stale paint
must and day-old fish sticks
mixed with cleaning solution
my cell walls are covered in
pictures of loved ones
cards of greetings and love
graffiti two times over
my cell is my domain
and it discriminates against no one
(to be continued...)

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Or perhaps, rather, it discriminates against whoever it happens to hold, regardless of guilt or innocence, regardless of his story, regardless of remorse or even repentance, regardless of feelings, regardless of time. For sure, your poem takes us into your cell with you, in our imaginations.

**my cell is lonely
with just me and my walls
no one to talk to**

I Miss You Dad

I miss you dad
And all the things we had
It's been so long
Why did everything go wrong
Why did I lie
And barely even cry
God why did you die
You died from AIDS
It feels like blades
In my heart my world became so dark
My head hurts
I'm going berserk
I miss you dad
What else can I say
I think about you every day
I should have stayed
Now you're not here
And for once my vision is clear
To me you are so dear
I won't ever fear because I know you'll always
be here.

-Mary Poppins, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we don't recognize what we have till it's gone. Life is precious. Remember this - and treat everyone how you feel they deserve to be treated, before it's too late. RIP Papa Poppins.

Me Quieren Quitar Lo Mejor De Mí

Soy Hondureño y lo que a mí me pasa es que estoy enamorado y me siento mal porque no puedo ver a mi novia, Anna. La amo mucho y la respeto porque sé que ella me respeta.

Cuando salga de acá voy a cambiar y a dejar de andar en las calles. Ella me ha dado un ser-humano que amo tanto lo cual es mi hijo y me quieren separar para Norte Carolina. La verdad es que no quiero ir allá porque tengo a estas dos personas que quiero mucho.

Mi novia me ha aguantado muchas cosas como lo que soy, un callejero que no tiene futuro. Ahora por mi dos amores estoy dispuesto a cambiar y por ellos estoy dispuesto a dar mi vida.

Les prometo cambiar por el amor que les tengo porque siendo un pandillero no voy a lograr nada. Les digo a mis homies que un hijo lo cambia todo y cuando tengan uno se van a dar cuenta de los que le estoy diciendo. Piensen en su futuro homies, la Mission no es todo homies. Piensen con la cabeza.

From The Beat: Esperamos que en verdad le prometas eso a tu novia y poder cumplirla seriamente. Tienes que darte cuenta que ya no estas sólo en este munda. Ya tienes a un hijo y a una mujer que te estan esperando afuera para que les brindes lo que realmente un hombre responsable tiene que darle. Acuerdate que decir una cosa es facil pero hacerla es otra. Por eso nosotros te aconsejamos que vayas buscando la manera en como irte alejando de esos caminos y de esas amistades malas que te han llebado al lugar donde te encuentras. ¿Tienes algo pensado en como cumplir esa promesa? Piensa en eso, eso es lo primero que debes de hacer. Esperamos que ellos algún día les llegue algo como a ti te pasó para que se den cuenta que en este mundo hay mejores cosa por la cual luchar y dar su vida.

They Want To Take Away The Best Of Me

I'm Honduran, and what happens to me is that I am in love and I feel bad because I cannot see my girlfriend, Anna. I love her a lot and I respect her because I know she respects me.

When I get out of here, I'm going to change and stop roaming the streets. She has given me a human being who I love a lot, and that is my son, and they want to separate me from him by sending me to North Carolina. The truth is, I don't want to go over there because I have these two people whom I love a lot.

My girlfriend has put up with a lot of my crap and with who I am, a young man who does not have a future. For my two loved ones I am willing to change and willing to put my life on the line.

I promise them that I am going to change because of the love that I have for them because by me being a gangster, I'm not going to accomplish anything. I tell my homies that having a child changes everything, and when they have one, they're going to realize and understand what I am talking about. Think about your futures homies. The Mission is not everything homies. Think with your heads.

-Margen, B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope that you really did promise this to your girlfriend and that you will really fulfill your promise. You have to realize that you're no longer alone in this world. You have a son and a woman who are waiting for you on the outs for you to show them what a real and responsible man brings to the table. Keep in mind that it is so easy to say something, yet being true to your word is another. That's why we advice you to start seeking alternatives that will help you distance yourself from the path you're currently following and from those bad influences that have led you to where you find yourself right now. Do you have something in mind as to how you're going to fulfill this promise? Think about this; that's the first thing you should do. We hope that one day, what happened to you, happens to your friends so they have realize that in this world there are better things to fight for and better things to risk your life over.

Until There's a Cure for Cancer

My grandfather's the root of the family, has cancer and I've never lived without him. He's always been there, someone we can go see, someone who would lift up our spirits and keep the family together, such as a rock, a core, when my grandfather was present no one ever argued, cursed or really disagreed with each other. But now that he's in New York with the oldest of his daughters, she just wants his life insurance, so basically she's waiting for him to die and she wasn't getting enough money for his in-home care, so she put him in a convalescent home and him being away from his family is making him sicker and sicker. And they put him on chemotherapy and he started losing his hair, and he lost hella weight, and now he's in a coma and hopefully he comes up out of it, and regroup and come back to the family so everything can be the same and our family can come back together and associate and socialize with each other and become a family again!

Love you, grandpa

BAMA love (Bayless-Annette-Marie-Amanda), peace out.

-Bama, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Family issues are always hardest to deal with. Hopefully your aunt is making the best decisions regarding your grandfathers health. Your grandfather will stay in our prayers. Stay strong.

Me

You wanna know about me? I don't come from the streets. I'm not from Oakland, I don't rep a set. I don't go stupid hangin' out cars rollin' down the street. I don't slang dope or anything like that. I'm not livin' large, actin' like I'm in charge. I'm not in jail for sellin' myself or shootin' at somebody. No I didn't steal nothin'. No parole violation or runaway

Somebody might laugh at this but I'm here for throwing a shoe at somebody. That's it and that's all. Assault on a police officer. His head at that. But don't get ideas - I am not bad.

For that stupid choice I been in jail for four months now. I'm "about to leave" says the judge. But we all know how that is, don't we.

I grew up with my mom. She's one of the sheriffs of Oakland, second of her five. (Altogether I got a lot). We live in a four bedroom house in Berkeley in a white area. We got a front yard and a large back yard. We ain't poor. My mom was around a lot, and our father was around more. I'm an honor roll student. My mom was always tellin' me I was her favorite child. I was loved.

My older sister's in college. Not a regular college. She lives in a dorm at Cal State Hayward. All my siblings are smart, funny, and popular. Except me. I'm just book smart. My mom keeps us all sheltered. Anyway, I'm fifteen so naturally I'm gonna want a boyfriend. But oh, no way, my mom says "Wait til you're sixteen." So what do I do? I move to a group home. Aren't I smart? Not!

My life has been pretty much downhill from there. And now I'm here. If you want to know, yes I feel stupid. So there you go, a story of another rebellious teen. Never thought it'd be me. This time I gotta go to a parole group home. Oh joy! At least I get to go home in nine months.

So all of you who think it's your homes or circumstances, think again. You don't have to be from the ghetto to make a mistake.

-Assata Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You speak the truth Assata. Mama does know best. When in doubt, ask yourself - what would your mama do. Making bad decision is just part of life. Learning from then should also be.

Trapped Wishing

Will I ever be free
From these chains
That keep grasping me
Digging into my body
Leaving me deformed
And bloody
It's a storm
That rages inside me
Never to let go
Of my mentality
Clouding up my mind
With "reality"
A huge sign
Posted in front of my mind's eye
Leaving nothing
But apathy
It's inimical
It's hypothetical
The decisions one must face
That are so innocuous
From the base
Of the unconscious
The taste
It's more sour than a war head candy
But you can't taste it
'Cause it doesn't coeval
With this shhh
Our minds shhh on us
The nostalgia
To relive what we did
When we hid
In the shadow
As our minds
Raped up
One at a time
So we could fight
For the sublime
Part of our lives
But we strive
To be raped again
By our minds
When we were kids
Growing up
And the things that we did
From the people we hid
We're all trapped
By these chains
Whether we like it or not!

-Caos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Dark piece Caos. Is there no chance of redemption? Is it a bad thing to live our lives in an innocuous way? You wanna make a statement? You wanna affect others with your ideas? You wanna make a change? Keep writing.

**You don't have
to be from the
ghetto to make
a mistake.**

Real Love

Real love just ain't sex.
 Real love ain't pass the blunt and let me hit it.
 Real love ain't doing what you have to please her.
 Real love ain't a black eye saying you ran into the door
 Real love ain't being called a bitch or whore.
 Real love ain't got no price on it
 Real love ain't pain.
 Real love ain't game.
 Real love ain't looks.
 Real love ain't like a fairy tale
 Real love is when you're in heaven instead of hell.

-Lil' Lit, San Mateo

From The Beat: We know how old you are, so it's surprising to read such a deep piece from you about real love. Have you experienced real love in your young life? What was it like? If not, would you like to? In your terms of "real love," how would you describe the person you're looking for? Do you consider yourself in heaven or hell? How can you get to heaven and put hell behind you?

Rushing

Reading is rushing
 Life is rushing
 Running from something is rushing
 Rushing, rushing, it's something always
 Rushing
 If I really think about it
 Time is always rushing by my eyes
 I'm sick of everything rushing
 I want to slow the rush down
 I want to slow my life down
 I want to see what's happening
 I want to see something go past me
 By my eyes

-Jason B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree that everything seems to be rushing by us sometimes. How can you slow down your own life? When you get sick of everything rushing, how do you calm yourself down? What kind of place do you imagine when you think of someplace that isn't rushing all the time?

The Lord Is Real

If I was to have a conversation with Donald Beardslee, I would ask him a couple of questions. Like:

How do you feel?
 What are you feeling?
 Why did you do what you did to get you here?
 Do you have any advice for me to not end up where you are at?
 Do you feel sorry for what you did?
 Would you take what you did back?
 What are you thinking right now?
 Are you scared?
 Do you ask the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness?
 Does it feel strange for you right now?
 Would you change your ways if God gave you another chance?
 God Bless you.

-Cordero B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: These are all good questions, Cordero. If he believed in some other religion than yours (for example, if he was a Buddhist or a Muslim), do you think he could find salvation and forgiveness? What do you think he was thinking and feeling as he watched the clock tick away the last moments of his life?

Get It Right, Keep It Right

They locking us up, but the jail ain't change us. We shoot guns and kill each other, like 25 to life never cross our mind. Doing anything to get that green: robbing, killing, and selling dope to our people. Now every day we wake up (in B4), and all we see is green.

God, please tell me why this world seems so crazy to me. I know if I keep doing what I'm doing, I'll be getting ready to get executed like Donald Beardslee, or be somewhere in the pen doing 25 to life.

But only God know that I ain't going down that road, because I'm doing a 360 with my life. I am staying out of jails, and stop shooting guns that kill my people. But I can't stop doing anything to get that green, I'm just going do it the right way — because 25 to life do cross my mind.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Lil' Dakota, you are wrong! It's not just God that knows, because we also know that you are not going to head down that dead-end road. You have shown us over time and through your writing that you have changed, and we have faith in you. Keep your head high up, and keep up the good work.

AJDS

If there was a disease that I would like to cure it would be AIDS. I want to cure that because there are a lot of people affected by it. Some people don't even know they are infected by this disease. I really don't think that people should die because of others not telling them they were infected.

It's not curable and people shouldn't be dying over it. I had a friend who got burnt over a female (on a one-night stand). That shhh really hit me because we were so close. He never told anyone that he had it, so no one knew about it.

This is one of the most deadly diseases out there right now. I'm telling everyone reading this right now to have protected sex, if any at all. So I encourage you to talk to your sex partner about it.

Holla!

-Lil' Ct B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you 100%, Pengo. What we find so sad about your piece is that your friend felt like he couldn't talk about it, couldn't tell anyone about his condition. We can only imagine how bad he felt, and how ashamed, not to share his burden with a friend. Your advice to have "protected sex, if any at all" is the best advice we could give, and we hope sexually active readers of The Beat take it to heart.

**But only God
 know that I ain't
 going down that
 road, because I'm
 doing a 360
 with my life.**

Don't Be A Follower

Ninjas, always trying to follow some kind of G in the
'hood

Not knowing what G risk is

Being... shot to death, 25 to life, or being robbed

All the youngsters see is the money, girls, cars, clothes
The Gs are pushin' rocks, poppin' glocks, bustin' knocks

OGs didn't have a chance to finish high school

But us youngsters still got a chance to finish our school

Don't be the young fool and follow, you'll get filled wit'
hollows

Creat your trend so you can lead the new school Gs

I'm the new school G, follow me

I come with a lot less risks

Sometimes you may have to use your fists

Writing, take a little course or something at a community
college

Pushin' rap CDs, workin' minimum wage

Just to jump to another page it takes time

But it's that daily grind

My message to all you young readers is don't be a
follower, be a leader

If you do follow something, follow something positive

-Cordero, San Mateo

From The Beat: We couldn't agree more (except we'd be even cooler with it if we didn't have to knuckle up). Everyone follows sometimes — it's one of the ways we learn. If we choose to follow those who set a good example, we often find that when we're ready to step up and lead the road ahead doesn't detour towards places like juvenile hall, jail and prison. How can you be that new school G you speak about? How can you take advantage of your education and keep pushing it even further? How can you make good on the promise, the potential you embody?

Only We Can Break The Cycle

Coming out of the "box" to watch playoffs in
Hillcrest

Every day I notice a cycle of the system

Different kinds of races

Replacing all kinds of faces

Seein' people come back with same cases

Some with new cases — What's the basis?

Can we break the cycle? I think we can!

One by one! Choice by choice! Day by day!

I know that it's going to be hard

But I swear if the youngsters come together

We can break through any weather

-Cordero, San Mateo

From The Beat: It is through actions both individual and collective that the cycle can be broken for good. How can you set an example of someone who makes the string of correct choices, day after day? How can you work with others to provide them the encouragement to do the same?

Playin' Against The Odds

Being a young black man

People don't understand

How hard it is to withstand

Statistics say one out of every five

Will end up in prison

One out of four will end up dead before 25

All my life I been playin' against the odds

So it isn't odd to play again

Sometimes I hide

I only listen to the voice inside

If it leads me wrong I will not win

I'll learn from my misunderstanding

And try to play again

-Cordero, San Mateo

From The Beat: The statistics that show young black me going to prison or dying young are tragic, but if you check the odds closely you'll see that more make it than don't. How can you continue to swing those odds in your favor, not only for yourself, but for the youngsters who look up to you? How can you train the voice inside to speak of truth and beauty and righteousness, to pathways that lead towards redemption and success?

Let Him Go

I gave you my love to hold

But you pretended to love me and have my heart on hold

I gave you my freedom and my virginity

And this is how you repay me

I was holding our child thinking you were going to take care of me

But you lied, cheated and hit me

You drove my family crazy

Couldn't you tell they didn't want anything to do with me?

You still denied that it was your baby

I had no support so my thing to do was abort it

You asked me to marry you

But I did the right thing and not carry it for you

You made me drown my pillow in tears

Thinking in my sleep, is this all a dream or my worst fear?

I had called you on Sunday and you answered your phone

A girl in the background said, "Don't let anybody know"

I hear her also say, "Are you playing on me? Hang up on the phone"

You hung up and left me to cry

All this pain inside just wants me to give up and die

But then I'm better than that

I don't need to fight back

I'm going to move on and let it go

I'm laughing just saying "karma" with a big smile on my face

You don't even know what I did or even my part of the story

Thinking you're a playa when I had met your cousin

That is also a different story

-Loudie, San Mateo

From The Beat: Up until the last lines, you resisted the temptation to fight back against his lack of care with your own, a mature response to a situation where you've been wronged. How can you pick up the pieces and begin to move on? Are there lessons from this relationship that will serve you well as you seek to develop a healthier relationship with someone else in the future? Your tears can water the seeds of resilience growing inside — don't let bitterness consume your sense of self and the growth that's possible from this tough time.

Just Tell Me

Can't they just take me to trial

to tell me how long

'Cause I'm sorry for what happened

'nd I know I was wrong

How you gonna drop

a murder attempt on me

Without any knowledge of who I am or

anything 'bout my family?

No, I ain't gonna go to the Y,

I'm learnin' a lot here

And if my mom's is sad, imagine how

she'll feel if I'm gone for years

So judge listen up, I've been doin' good

I even changed, just let my time be up

-T-Tocs, San Mateo

From The Beat: Unfortunately, the actions that you're to be judged on are the ones in the past not those of the present, and while it can sometimes help to have good write-ups in the Hall the judge can still sentence you harshly. If you are sentenced to the Y, how can you continue to learn? What will you do to continue to focus on making sure you don't do what you know is wrong again?

Stephanie: A Moral Lesson For Cheaters

In retrospect, I knew a girl that loved me so much
It was hard for me to say "I love you" 'cause love is tough
I had enough of this rough relationship that's a bluff
A break up was a must, 'cause there wasn't any trust
But hell, what can I do? Just stand there and adjust
I couldn't take it anymore — she wanted love, I wanted
lust

But temptation sucks, so I stayed wit' her
The relationship was coo' until the end it was bitter
So here's the story

Of this girl named Stephanie
A full-time student but on weekends took ecstasy
So emotional, always cried on the left of me
She loved me so much

She wiped her tears by having sex with me
One night after sex, she said somethin' to me that really
hit me

It took a long time for me to think about it 'cause it hit me
She said, "I really do want more of you
Look Rich, I love you so much that I would die for you"
Come to think about it, I didn't even feel the same way
I told her bluntly I ain't serious and still she gave me
leeway

What a tolerant girl that had hella faith in me
Didn't think I would cheat 'cause her lady friends hated
me

So one night I was with her best friend named Holly Lee
At the theater, little did I know that she followed me
She was a seat in back of us when we was kissin'
Every single word we said to each other she listened
We cut the movie short, and I took her back to the house
She seen everything through the window of us on the
couch

I was gettin' my pleasure, I was gettin' my sex
She was gettin' the full measure, she was gettin' the best
The next morning I woke up from long hours of rest
Went straight to the telephone to say good morning to
Steph

Her mom told me she never showed up last night
She was worried, her voice didn't sound alright
Step was missing for two weeks; everybody was worried
Everyone searched for her in a hurry

So one day her mother opened up her closet
There was a foul stench that arose and it made her want
to vomit

It was Stephanie laying there in a posture of a coffin
She poisoned herself and sliced both of her wrists
There was a note laying there with my name: "Dear Rich"
It said, "Dear Rich, remember when I said that I would die
for you?"

Well here I am, hope to see you soon."

If you are with someone who loves you to death, think
twice of fidelity. When you cheat you don't know how much
pain you're causing. There are consequences of cheating
and you may not know it. It may be little consequences but
karma can hit you five times worse. Just think before you
cheat, or think about Stephanie.

-Rich, San Mateo

From The Beat: We're glad you told us that this wasn't a true story while you were writing it — damn, that would be harsh. The essence of your message rings true: that it's important to think about the consequences of your actions. However, there are people who are cheated on who act in a way just as clear as Stephanie, but one which doesn't hurt them in the process — they leave the person who cheats. There is no glory in suicide, and just as the consequences of cheating that may go beyond what we imagine, suicide has consequences that hurt more people than simply the victim.

To My Almost Dead Homie

Man why'd you do it?
You thought you weren't going to get caught
Look at you now
In death row
Crying to the judge
And to all the people that show you love
Why couldn't you work it out
Instead of going to kill with no doubt?
I love you and want you to be free
But instead you're on death row
Paying your last fee
I'll be there in death or life
And be there to comfort your wife
When you take your last breath
Putting your fragile life to the test
I love you Jr.

I wish you would've thought it all out sooner

-Paula-Paula, San Mateo

From The Beat: You took this topic from the theoretical to the all-too-real based on your homie who is actually on death row. You express conflicting emotions with eloquence, and we understand completely why you are upset at him and for him at the same time. Do you think you'll try to get back in touch with him when you get out? How can you square the loving homie you know with the man who did what he did?

**I'll be there in
death or life
And be there to
comfort your wife
When you take your
last breath**

Until There's A Cure

If I could get rid of any disease in the world,
I would cure AIDS. I would want to cure AIDS
because so many people each day are dying from
it. There are also mothers giving birth to children
who get the disease and don't get a chance to live
without the diseases.

If I could cure it I think it would make a big
impact on the world as so many people who
deserve to have a chance to live a longer life can.

A little girl I know who was four years died
from this. She got it from her mother. She was
so innocent and loving. She never deserved the
disease but she got it and had to live with it. She
knew she wouldn't live her life as long as she
could but she lived it to the fullest. She showed
me how short life can be, and how I should not
dwell on the bad things. She is one of the reasons
why I want to be able to cure this disease.

-Jenny, San Mateo

From The Beat: In response to this topic many people came up with diseases they'd want to cure that we'd love to see, but few came with a story as personal or as well thought through as yours. There's a deep lesson in that little girl's strength, and it's a lesson that we could all stand to learn. Will this goal motivate you to get back to school and study so that you can help find a cure? How can her memory motivate you to bigger and better things, no matter what goals you pursue?

Cure Sickie Cell Anemia

If I could find a cure for a disease, it would be sickle cell anemia. I would cure it because the love of my life has the disease.

If I had a cure for it, it would help and reduce a lot of people from pain and suffering from this horrible disease. The love of my life would benefit from my cure, and I wouldn't have to see him in pain. And I would benefit from this cure — my auntie died from the disease, and she was such a kind person, so full of life. My auntie was my role model. She was a great cook.

-Cupcake, San Mateo

From The Beat: Personal experiences like these — your love and your aunt stricken with the same disease — are what drive many young people to study medicine. Many people don't know what sickle cell anemia is. Can you help spread awareness so that more people are interested in finding a cure, as well as providing comfort to those who suffer from it?

**I never thought about
all the pain I put you
through. I was selfish, I
was wrong, and I'm sorry.**

Glitter Girl

The angel of a girl who hates to sin
That's what I can be like within

A crooked door

A broken lock

A crazy girl

Who likes to rock

The inner beast

That can't be bound

The splendid feast

That can't be found

I am the sun

I am the moon

The emotional idiot

Who spoke too soon

A disappointment

To father and mother

Year to year

Winter to fall

Livin' like a gutter girl

I'm the chick who does it all

I am

Pink

Shishedo red

A vibrant field

Filled with dead

I am woman

I am man

I am girl

Who glitters

-Elsa, Marin

From The Beat: You're an amazing poet, Elsa. You sound like you have pride and spunk. You describe yourself as broken and crazy, a disappointment to your parents, an emotional idiot. But you also write that you glitter, and you don't like to sin. How do you feel deep down inside about being a chick who "does it all"? Does this mean you do things you really don't want to do? If so, can you stop doing whatever confuses you? Makes you unhappy?

A Letter To Mom

Hi Ma,

How are you? I'm sorry I didn't even think about how you felt about all this. All I ever thought about was myself. I never thought about all the pain I put you through. I was selfish, I was wrong, and I'm sorry.

I don't know what I can do to make it up to you, 'cause I have done a lot of harsh things to you — things I've said, things I've done. I've blocked it all out but you haven't because it was done to you. And sometimes it's hard, Ma, all the stuff I have done.

Ma, I just talked to my counselor and she said she just talked with you. Ma, I'm so so so so happy. I got to go. I love you. Thank you for being here because I need you.

-Tamika, San Mateo

From The Beat: As the saying goes, better late than never — this new recognition of how you've hurt your mother through your actions can be the basis for a new beginning of your relationship with your mother. What made you realize how you were affecting your mother? How can you learn to recognize the effects your actions may have on your mom — and others — before you do anything that may hurt her?

A Cold Game

What I really can't understand is the shhh I been through

I really think I been through more shhh than a tissue

It be times when I just wanted to sit down in cry

Really deep down inside

I scream "ffff the world" because it got me livin' to die.

Man, you can't tell me face-to-face, eye-to-eye

That a real thug don't cry

When you keep it inside

It's goin' to come out in bad anger

Next thing you know you lookin' at a stranga

You see the barrel of my pistol and yo' life is in danger

Sometimes I can't live without a fight

Because ninjas nowadays trying to take my life

This beef shhh got me livin' in the fast lane

To the point I can't trust my own homie,

It's a cold game.

-Jamal B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, Jamal, it's a cold game. And the fast lane is where all the road kill is. So, since you can't even trust your own homie while you stuff those tears deep down inside, maybe you should consider not playing that cold game. You must decide what is more important to you, your freedom or your fast-lane lifestyle? Your life and health or your "cold game." Both choices are difficult, so that can't be avoided. But one choice has a long-term payoff, and the other doesn't. And we know which is which.

If Only I Could!

If I could only cure a disease, it would have to be AIDS and cancer just because I know those are the serious ones. I think people that get some kind of cancer is not fair, only because they do nothing to deserve it. I mean you get it even if you're good or bad.

But people that get AIDS is not really their fault either. But then again, it kinda is because it's their fault for not using protection. But still, it ain't fair to die for a stupid reason such as any kind of sickness that is not even your fault that you get.

So yeah, if only I could, those would be the diseases I would get rid of.

-Jr, San Mateo

From The Beat: When it comes to disease, fairness gets left out of the equation. We agree that cancer and AIDS are among the most serious diseases out there. We also appreciate your appreciation that people who acquire HIV, which leads to AIDS, don't "deserve" the disease, as well as your reminder to engage in safe sexual practices. Do you know anyone who has been struck with cancer or AIDS? How can you provide comfort to those with AIDS or cancer while they're still living?

Para Formar Un Buen Hogar

Bueno, para hacer de tu casa un buen hogar, uno debería de comportarse bien con sus padres, no andar en malos pasos, concentrarse como una persona humilde, y tener concentimiento hacia todos las personas. También necesitan comportarse con los hermanos bien, con los padres, obedecer lo que ellos dicen porque si uno no obedece, nunca va mejorar su hogar.

En mi vida por quien me levanto todos los días es por mi Dios quien está en los cielos. Él es quien nos da salud, alimentos, y él es todo en nosotros. Entonces, por eso es que debemos de vivir la vida bien.

Bueno, cuando uno anda haciendo cosas malas, uno aveces se siente más grande que otro. Entonces, uno se siente encantado algunas veces, pero no es bueno andar en cosas malas porque de allí proviene la cárcel y otras cosas.

From The Beat: Tienes razón en todo lo que dices, portandose bien es la única manera como uno puede ayudar en la familia a formar una buena hogar. ¿Hablamos de ti, cómo es tu hogar? Conforme a los que nos escribistes podemos ver que la única persona que ha estado haciendo falta en el hogar eres tú. ¿Estamos equivocado? Hablamos de ti, sobres tus pensamientos con respecto a lo que te pasó. ¿Estas dispuesto a cambiar? ¿Harás todas las cosas bien como nos las has pintado?

Making Home A Better Place

All right, in order to make your home a better place, one should listen to one's parents, one should not be following bad paths, one should think like a humble person does, and be considerate towards everyone who lives in the same home as you. Also, one should behave oneself with one's siblings and listen to what one's parents have to say, because if one doesn't listen to what one's parents have to say, one's home will never become a better place.

In my life, the person whom I get out of bed for is for my God who is up in heaven. He is the one who gives us health, nourishment, and He is everything in us. So, that's why we should live life the right way.

Well, when one is involved in bad things, one feels bigger than the next person, so at times, one feels delighted, but it is not good to be involved in bad things because through being involved in bad things comes incarceration and other unwanted things.

-Canaca B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have a point in everything you say. Behaving oneself is the only way one can help out your family in making home a better place. However, let's talk about you: What is your home like? Based on what you just wrote, we can see that you're the only person who's missing back home. Are we mistaken? Share with us your thoughts about what happened to you. Are you willing to change? Are you going to do things right, like the picture you painted for us indicates?

**Luego sali de ese
lugar desepcionado y
pensando en matar,
pero el Señor me ayudó
a salir adelante**

Una De Las Historia De Mi Vida

No me siento bien cuando hago algo malo. Voy a contarles lo que a mí me sucedio. Yo sali de mi país en busca de una vida mejor, pero en el camino, me enamoré de una linda muchacha que me volvio completamente loco de amor por ella. Luego, sali de ese lugarde, dejándola llorando.

En camino hacia acá me agarro migración y me deportaron a mi país y me regrece. En cinco días, volvi al mismo lugar, pero ya la encontré con otro novio.

Luego sali de ese lugar desepcionado y pensando en matar, pero el Señor me ayudó a salir adelante. Luego sali de mi país y llegue por fin a Arizona y volvi a enamorarme de nuevo de otra bella mujer.

Todavía en las noches, antes que me acuesto a dormir pienso en formar mi familia y en tener muchos hijos.

Ojalá Dios me de fuerza para salir adelante. Me gustaría, cuando sea grande, ser alguien muy famoso para ayudar a muchos que necesitan de alguien.

-Mario B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Hemos copiado que desde que salistes de tu país te has encontrado con muchos obstaculos que te han desviado del buen camino. Sentimos mucho lo que pasó con tu primer amor. Queremos que sepas y tengas en mente que la decisión de abandonar lo que tenía la tomastes tú y la vida sigue y los demás necesitamos seguirlos también. Se te olvidó decirnos que pasó con la otra muchacha que te enamorastes. ¿Qué pasó con ella? ¿Y si volvistes y tanto querias a esa muchacha porque estas otra vez preso? Antes que se nos olvide, deberias de tomar en serio las cosas que dices o las cosas que haces, por ejemplo, cuando dijistes que lo unico que querias era matar, una vez que te distes cuenta que la muchacha ya estaba con otro. Nadie merece morir por cualquier tipo de problema. Tú que crees en Dios, deberias de saber que el único que pueda dar y quitar la vida es Dios.

A Story About An Incident That Happened In My Life

I don't feel good when I do something bad. I'm going to share with you all an incident that happened to me. I left my country in search of a better life, but on my way, I fell in love with a wonderful girl who had me completely crazy over her. Later on, I got out of that place and left her crying.

On my way over here, I got caught by immigration and they deported me back to my country, but I came back. In five days I came back to the same spot, only to find her with another boyfriend.

I left that place desperate and with thoughts of committing murder, but the Lord helped me overcome these thoughts. Later on, I left my country and I finally arrived in Arizona and once again, I fell in love with another beautiful woman.

I still, at night, before I lay my head to sleep, think about forming my own family and having many kids.

Hopefully God gives me the strength to come out ahead. When I am older, I would like to be someone famous so I can help out others who are in need of help.

-Mario B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Based on your piece, we see that ever since you left your country, you've encountered a lot of obstacles that have made you deviate from the right path in life. We feel bad about what happened to you with your first love. We want you to know, and to keep in mind, that the decision to abandon what you had was on you, and life goes on. This applies not just to you but to everyone. You forgot to tell us what happened with the other girl you fell in love with. What happened with her? And if you came back, and you loved that girl so much, why are you locked up again? Before we forget, you should take what you say, and the things you do, seriously. For example: When you said the only thing you wanted to do was kill once you found out that your first love was with someone else. No one deserves to die over any type of problem. You, who believes in God, should know that the only person who can give and take life away is God.

Mi Abuela

Mi abuela tenía cancer. Ella estuvo mucho tiempo en el hospital y después la llevaron para la casa porque los doctores pudieron hacer nada por ella.

Cuando ella estaba en la casa, nosotros velábamos todas las noches por ella porque ella lloraba mucho porque le pegaba un dolor terrible. Mi mamá y mis tías la cuidaban muy bien, pero ella y nosotros hacíamos todo lo que pudimos para comfortarla, pero lamentablemente murió.

From The Beat: Es muy triste lo que le pasó a tu abuelita. Gracias a Dios ahora ella está descansando en paz, sin dolor, sin sufrimiento y siempre mirando por aquellos quienes las quisieron mucho, incluyendote a ti mismo. Aunque no lo creas, ella siempre estará en tu corazón y en los demás, viviendo siempre.

My Grandmother

My grandmother had cancer. She was in the hospital for a very long time and then later on they took her home because the doctors couldn't do anything with her.

When she was at home, we would pray every night for her because she would cry a lot from all the pain she would have. My mother and my aunts took very good care of her, but no matter how much my mother, aunts, and I tried to comfort her, unfortunately, she still passed away.

-Veronica GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's very sad what happened to your grandmother. But thanks to God she is now resting in peace, without pain, without suffering, and always looking down and watching out for those who loved her very much, including you. Even though you may not believe this, she will always be in your heart and in the hearts of others, and she will forever be alive in your hearts.

Truth

Let me tell you something
This shhh up in dees walls
Forget this shhh
Sorry if I'm comin' too strong
But at times it's needed
Look at yourself
I look at myself all the time
I really don't feel right up in this witch
There's more than bricks and guards
Tellin' us what to do!
Let's do som' 'bout this shhh!
Raise up and be a man
'Cause in the end it's just you
Do something
Go places, go to school, get a degree
Something,
'Cause I'm through

-Plae, Marin

From The Beat: You sound like you're ready to take responsibility for yourself, and that you're proud of becoming a man. You don't blame anyone else for your being back up in the Hall. What do you dream about for your life? You can draw and write, so you have some talent to build on. But what do you want? By the way, we're sorry if we spelled your name wrong, we couldn't read it.

Si Fuera Dios

Si fuera Dios por 24 horas, destruyiera el mundo porque me quieren dar vida en prisión, pero a la misma vez, también hiciera muchas cosas.

Talvez no acabaría con el mundo, pero si acabaría todas las personas que hacen cosas malas como yo y trataría de que no hubiera armas o cosas que sean útiles para hacer daño.

Si pudiera, despertaría a todos los miembros de mi familia que se han muerto porque tengo mucho familiares que se han muerto. Lo haría porque con algunos miembros de mi familia nunca tube la oportunidad de conocerlos. También, yo hubiera ido a una playa con toda mi familia. Esto es todo lo que hiciera.

From The Beat: Es muy triste lo que nos has dicho. ¿Crees tú que sería justo que se terminara el mundo, las vidas de los animales, de las plantas, de las personas, de los niños que son felices con sus sonrisas grandes, del sol, las estrellas, y de todas las maravilla del mundo sólo porque te quieren dar vida? En la otra mano, sabias que en el testamento dice, que si eres salvado, Dios llegará al mundo y levantará a los muertos y quedarán en la tierra aquellos quienes en Él han creído y cuyos pecadores se han arrepentido. O sea que no necesitarías ser Dios para poder realizar unos de estos pedidos. En tus mano está tu destino.

If I Were God

If I were God for 24 hours, I would destroy the world because they want to give me life in prison, but at the same time, I would also do a lot of things.

Maybe I wouldn't destroy the world, but I would rid the world of all the people who do bad things like myself, and I would try to rid the world of weapons, or things that can be utilized to cause harm to another person.

If I could, I would wake up all the members from my family who have died because I have a lot of family members who have died. I would do this because I didn't have the opportunity to get to know some of my deceased family members. Also, I would have gone to a beach with my entire family. That's all that I would do if I were God.

-Chato, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's very sad what you have just shared with us. Do you think it is just for the world to come to an end, the life of animals, the life of plants, people, the little kids who are happy with their huge, smiling faces, the sun, the stars, and all the other marvelous things in this world just because they want to give you life in prison? On the other hand, did you know that in the Testament it says that if you are saved, God will come to the world and will wake up the dead, and the ones who did not believe in Him and are sinners will remain on Earth while His people go up to heaven with Him and live happily ever after? You don't have to be God to know some of the things mentioned above. Your destiny is in your hands.

Anybody Can Do It

I'm up in Walden House PSK. You heard tryna do my time, you feel me? It's hella busy in here, but on the real I'm tryna get my thang together 'cause I ain't finna go to the hall. No! I been there and done that.

I'm doing good 'cause of the fact that I want to get out earlier than what I'm supposed to. I hope to go out for my pass on Saturday 'cause that's my brother's birthday and I been waiting for a long time. But I think they ain't gonna let me go 'cause I feel like I'm gonna get a contract. But it's nothing to a female boss.

To all my girls up in the halls in San Leandro, keep ya head up. Don't let nobody get to you. It's nothing. You choose your own decisions. Do what is best for you. On the real, anybody can do it. Don't be no dummy girl. We all girls, we better than that.

-Marilyn, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You spit some really good advice in this positive piece. What we like most about this piece is that you say clearly that you have the power (we all have the power) to make our own choices, and every choice comes with consequences. Some are bad. (You've been there, done that.) But others are very good, and it's those consequences that you're now preparing yourself for, and that is admirable. We don't quite agree that being where you are is "nothing," but we know what you mean. And we know you're turning your life into something. Go for it!

How Come?

How come this system keeps harassing me?
 How come it feels like people give up on me?
 How come I always end up back here, just because my
 mom is broke?
 How come for the first time I was actually devoted
 to having a better life and the bored-ass system had
 another lame excuse?
 How come, because of other people in my life, my
 decisions, and just living life, period, I always end up
 here?
 Because of this shhh, I'm going to make sure I'm
 going to have money for my kids, 'cause life is not
 worth being locked up!

-Gata, Marin

From The Beat: Who has given up on you, Gata? Your mom? At least you haven't given up on yourself! What would happen if you got a part-time job after school and/or on weekends, and helped your mom pay the rent, buy food, the heating bill, etc? Does your mom need help? Part of growing up is realizing that other people, including the adults in your family, could use some help from their teens. What else could you do to make your mom's life easier? Wash the kitchen floor, clean the bathroom? Do you think that raising kids, especially if you're a single woman, is difficult?

If Only I Could

If I could start my own business it would be a kicked-back spot where kids my age that have no one could come instead of being out in the street joining gangs and getting high.

It would be called Escondido's Kicked Back Spot. It would be in San Diego in a city called Escondido. I would have friends that don't bang no more be the staff. It would help the community by keeping kids off the street.

-Fantasy, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Would you limit participation just to young people like you, or would us oldsters also be able to enjoy such a positive Kicked Back Spot? Why do you have no one? If you could invent a family to live with, what would it be like?

Mental Retardation

Cure retardation
 We all deserve equal perception
 Let them experience the world
 Equality!

There are so many people mentally retarded
 More than we know,
 Unable to communicate
 Beyond the level of infants

The degeneration of physical abilities
 Is far worse
 When life is but a breath away
 And you are asphyxiated

Cure retardation
 Equality for all!

-Drusilla, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: What a fine goal, to cure retardation. What made you interested in this condition? Do you know people or have friends or family who suffer from mental retardation? Would you consider working toward curing or preventing it? How would you go about that? What did you mean when you wrote about the loss of physical abilities "when life is but a breath away"?

Until There Is A Cancer Cure

Watch what you do
 These streets is true
 The drugs is calling for you
 Think for yourself
 Take care of yo' health
 Do what's right
 Watch yo'self at night
 Before you do, think twice
 This about yo life

I wanna cure the cancer
 Be a poet or a dancer
 With cancer grandpa wasn't good
 I stayed with him, did the best I could
 If I could've saved him I would
 He was a Old G from the 'hood
 He was an old thug
 But now he choked up blood
 'Cause his stomach would blow up
 And blood was his throw up
 I was young and couldn't believe it
 Me and him was the two that was theiving
 What I can't believe is his mouth was bleeding
 It looked like the waterfall was streamin'
 Damn! Right out of his mouth
 I felt the pain for him but it wasn't ouch
 He got weaker and fell to the couch
 I couldnt do too much
 But to say that cancer is rough
 Ay we got to get these diseases out of the Bay
 Cure 'em far away
 'Cause that stuff just dont play
 Cancer is what I'd cure
 Grandpa of it, I'm 100% sure

-Iresha, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We feel the love you had for your grandpa in every line of this tight flow. It would be a great benefit to society if you (or someone) found a cure for cancer. Is this something you'd like to work on for real? Curing this terrible disease will take many, many people working in many, many different areas. Have you ever thought about becoming a doctor? Or a medical researcher?

Straight 'Hood

I call it straight 'hood
 because in the world you can't really tell
 who's bad or good
 People today don't even pay attention to what's going
 on sometimes people do what they hear on songs
 When you locked up ain't no telling what you
 thinkin'
 but dope fiends really be tweakin'
 To the man that's on death row please
 don't stress just go with the flow
 forget the negative think about the positive
 maintain you composure
 and remember the only way out is the way through.

-Rasheed, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an inventive lil' flow, and you cover some seriously broad territory in just a few lines. Do you pay attention to what's going on? How can you keep your own thinkin' straight? What's the positive that you're keeping focused on as you try to maintain your composure?

Mis Opiniones

Pienso que fue un grave error que el haya cometido ese error de haberle quitado la vida a esas mujeres. Le dijera que se preparara a la muerte, porque de una manera u otra tiene que rendir cuenta con Dios por lo que hizo.

La única solución para el SIDA es evitar el contagio y los beneficiados de esa cura serían los portadores de esa enfermedad. Yo he ido a ver personas infectadas del SIDA y es lamentable lo que sufren. Le pido a Dios que le encuentren cura a esas enfermedades.

From The Beat: Estamos consiente que lo que hizo no estuvo bien ante la sociedad y Dios. Esperamos que Dios lo perdone, si en realidad se merece ese perdón. En la otra mano, cuanto no daríamos por ayudar a esas personas necesitadas de esta cura contra esta terrible enfermedad. Dejamos todo en manos de Dios, que sea su voluntad.

My Opinions

I think he committed a grave error. He should have never taken the lives of those women. I would tell him to prepare himself for death because one way or the other, he has to render his story to God for what he did.

The only solution to AIDS is to avoid contracting it, and the beneficiaries of its cure would be those who are infected by this sickness. I've gone to go see people who were infected with AIDS, and it's unfortunate how much they have to suffer. I ask God to find a cure for those affected by this disease.

-Verónica GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're aware that what he did was not right under society's eyes and in God's eyes. We hope that God forgives him, if he is sincerely remorseful for his actions. On the other hand, you don't know how much we would love to find a cure for these needy people who suffer from this terrible illness. The only thing we can do is leave everything in God's hands and let Him see fit.

The Killing Disease

One disease I would cure is the "killing disease" that has hit the Bay Area -- and especially Oakland. Why I would cure it? Because it done killed too many people that I known and loved. RIP ANT, Greedy Creedy, Davon, JJ, Ju-ju and everybody that I missed. This disease is affecting everybody from old ladies all the way to little girls.

I'm not afraid of dying but if it happen it happens. But I pray every night to hope that I make it another day. If I was to find a cure, it would help a lot of people that have lost a loved one, it would help mankind cause nobody in the town would never die -- and all over the world.

-Lil' Rio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Amen. The Killing Disease has taken too many lives... and it doesn't look like anyone is rushing in from outside to cure it, so it looks like it's up to Oakland to cure its own self. Do you have any suggestions for rid the town of this terrible disease? What's causing it?

One disease I would cure is the "killing disease" that has hit the Bay Area and especially Oakland

Ya Abri Los Ojos

Para todos los homies de la calles. Disculpenme pero yo ya me di cuenta que las calles no es nada bueno porque lo único que te trae es la cárcel o la muerte.

Imaginensen cómo le haría tu madre si algún día te mataran en una pelea. Tu familia sufriría y tu madre también. Lo mejor es que estes bien. Piensa por tu familia. Las calles no lo es todo homies. No vayan a pensar que soy una leba, lo único que soy es un vato que se está dandoc uenta que la calle no trae nada bueno.

From The Beat: Es la primera vez que miramos un pedazo de esta manera, la cual alguien se disculpa por aber abierto los ojos. Sabes, tienes toda la razón, estamos contigo 100 por ciento, y la verdad es que desde el comienzo te hubiera dado cuenta que las calles no traen nada bueno a la sociedad. Creemos que ellos no pensarán de ti como una leba. Nomás eres una persona que se acaba de dar cuentas de las equivocaciones que uno comete, y has aprendido de tu error. Si sigues así, llegarás muy lejos. Te lo aseguramos. ¡Felicitaciones!

I've Opened My Eyes

This is dedicated to all the homies outs in the streets. Forgive me, but I've realized that the streets is nothing nice because the only thing the streets brings you is to jail or to your death.

Imagine what it would do to your mother if someday they killed you in a fight? Your family would suffer and your mother would, too. The best thing is for you to be all right. Think about your family. The streets is not everything, homies. Don't go around thinking that I am some kind of square bear, the only thing I am is a guy who is starting to realize that the streets have nothing to good offer.

-Mrgp B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is the first time we've come across a piece like this: Someone actually asking for forgiveness for having opened up his eyes to what's really going on. You know what? You make a good point and we're with you a 100 percent, and the truth is, it's unfortunate that it took you this long to realize that the streets don't have anything good to offer to society. We don't think of you as a square bear for thinking like this; we think that you're a smart person for thinking like this. You're just someone who just realized the error of your ways, and you've learned from your error. If you continue thinking like, you'll end up going very far in life. This we can definitely guarantee you. Congratulations!

Our Generation Can Be Different

Coming from Juvenile Hall, kids tend to seem judged or unable to follow through in school because they're already caught up in the system.

When I'm older, I want to start college with free scholarships to help all girls and boys, men and women, who have been locked up. In the end it will prove it doesn't matter who you are or what you've been through, but we all have the ability to earn a so-called high-class education.

Just because someone has more money, a perfect record and no emotional abuse, doesn't mean they're different from someone who used to hustle, use drugs, and got put on paperwork. We are all equally the same, despite age, sex, race, religion, lack of religion, size, gang, drug of choice, or block they live on. Don't ever forget education is the answer to come up, and get the green the safe way.

Believe in yourself and keep your eye on the prize.

By the way, thank you for everything, Daddy, Mommy, and Shannon. You are who's keeping me strong. I love each of you eternally.

-Bri-Bri GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Great thinking, Bri-Bri. You have a good heart that you are willing to share with others. What do you think it's going to take for you to keep your loving heart away from the drugs that cloud it over? Do you have a plan? If you were to get a scholarship to go to school, what would you study?

Para Tener Un Hogar Mejor

Para hacer de un hogar mejor hay que estar de acuerdo en muchas cosas con la familia para decidir que es lo mejor para un hogar feliz. No se necesita nada más que estar de acuerdo y con las manos en el corazón.

El esfuerzo por una vida mejor y por mi familia esas son mis razones para seguir adelante. A veces no todas las personas pensamos iguales ni sentimos lo que cada uno quiere hacer o siento por las demás personas.

A mí no me gusta hacer cosas malas ni que me las hagan porque hacer cosas malas hacen daño a uno y eso no está bien. Hacer cosas malas es no pensar ni en uno mismo.

From The Beat: Está super bien que pienses de esta manera. No hay como tener un hogar, rodeado con las personas que uno quiere y en el lugar donde uno le encanta estar. Nos gusta esa parte de tu lectura donde dices que no haces cosas malas porque no te gusta que te las hagan a ti también. Eso nos recuerda a aquel dicho que dice, "todo lo que sube tiene que bajar."

In Order To Have A Better Home

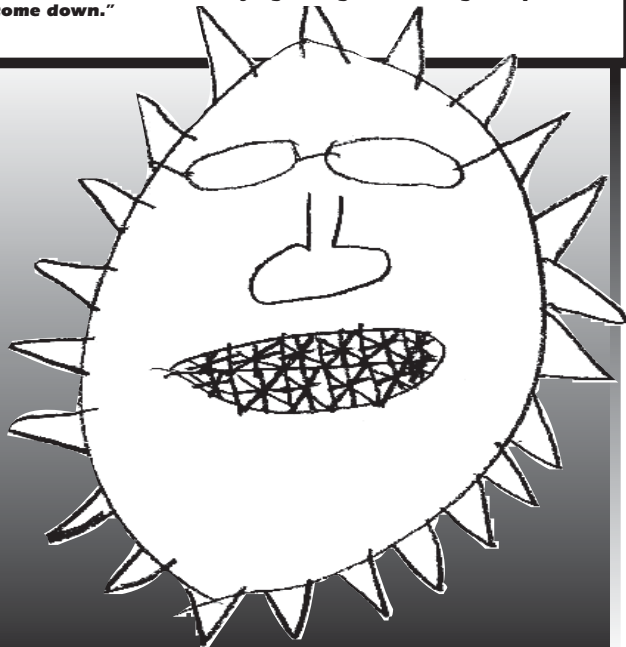
In order to have a better home, one has to be in agreement on a lot of things with one's family in order to decide what is best in making one's home better. One does not need anything. One just needs to be in agreement with one's family about things, and with one's hands in one's heart.

The struggle for a better life and for my family, those are my reasons to continue striving forward. Sometimes we all don't think the same, nor do we feel what the next person wants to do, or let alone feel for others.

I don't like to do bad things nor to have bad things done to me because by doing bad things it causes harm to someone, and that's not good. To do bad things is not to think, not even about oneself.

-Exis, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That's hella good that you're thinking this way. There's nothing like having your own place, surrounded by the people one loves, and being in the place one loves to be at. We like the part in your piece when you say you don't like to do bad things because you don't like bad things to be done to you. That reminds us of the saying that goes: "What goes up, must come down."



La Familia Es Lo Más Importante

La vida que he vivido ha sido muy fea. Nunca supe lo que era el cariño de un padre, de una madre ni del resto de mi familia porque no querían que viviera en la casa.

Yo también nunca sabía como portarme bien con mi familia. Yo quiero vivir de nuevo con mi familia, portarme bien, vivir con mis hermanos. Nunca me quisieron porque yo andaba haciendo drogas con todos mis amigos.

Mamá, perdón por todo lo que paso. Aunque mis hermanos nunca me quieran quiero que me perdone mi familia y todos los que me quieran. También necesito un poco de ayuda con lo que necesito.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que si buscas la manera como ganar el amor que no has podido lograr o el cariño que has perdido, lo puedas conseguir? Vivir entre odio entre familia es muy feo. No hay nadie más que la familia de uno. En caso que fueran ellos los que no te quieran, pues, mirate a ti mismo de piez a cabeza y dínos que es lo que te falta. Tienes piez, tienes manos, tienes inteligencia y tienes vida para poder salir adelante por ti mismo.

Family Is What's Most Important

The life that I've lived so far has been very ugly. I never knew what the affection of a father was, or from a mother, nor from the rest of my family because they didn't want me to live at home with them.

Also, I never knew how to behave myself with my family. I want to live with my family again, behave myself, and live with my brothers. They never did like me because I was running around doing drugs with all my friends.

Mom, forgive me for everything that happened. Even though my brothers may never love me, I would like my family, and everyone who loves me, to forgive me. Also, I need a little bit of help with what I need.

-Jose, Marin

From The Beat: Do you think if you look for a way to gain the love that you have not been able to acquire or the affection that you have lost, you'll be able to receive it? To live with hate and resentment within one's family is very ugly. There's nothing else in this world like someone's family. In case it's them who do not like you, well, look at yourself from head to toe, and tell us what are you missing. You have feet, you have hands, your intelligent, and you have life to be able to come out ahead for your own sake.

Sandro's Story

This is my life. I grew up in the streets – with my dad being a drunk. The only people that I had at that time were my homies, and my hood. I grew up banging, being a gangster, and holding up my flag. People think that we are criminals. Like the cops, they see us as nothing. But that's not true.

They call me Trespe. I am a parent and a soldier.

I love my girl, Felicia, a lot, but I also love my varrio. I been in it since I was nine, and now I'm 17, and about to be a dad. People still ask me: Will I die for my love for my varrio? And I say yes, I will. I will die for my varrio, my hood.

They been there when I needed them... my own family left me, and the only people that I have left is my baby's mom and my hood. I hold my flag with my pride, my crazy life. I wanna change for help. I need my heina, and people I can trust.

-Sandro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for putting your story down on paper, honestly and with pride. We are going to try and answer you with the same level of honesty, and with respect: We understand that for you, the gang feels like a family. And we believe that you are much more than just "a criminal", much more than what the police see. But now you have your own family, your blood, and a young life that YOU are responsible for. There is one thing that baby needs more than anything else, and that is you. Not your bravery, not your memory, not your glory – just you, alive, free, and home every night. One day you're going to have to choose. No one can ride two horses at the same time.

Change Is Good

While I'm locked up, I pray to Jah and do a thing called celesthenics. This is my way to relieve the mind from stress. I meditate, do breathing exercises, 500 pushups, 1000 situps, and 1000 back arm lifting against my coat rack. This makes me stronger, my mind tougher, relaxes me and I come out of my cell with no hatred, no animosity, just problem free, and the vibe between me and everyone else is a good vibe. So I figure it like this: I can replace this method with an unhealthy thought process, and my temper, decisions, and mentality could be better from what it used to be.

The most important thing is identifying the problem, and I have a temper problem identified, how can I solve it? With this! I like to fight but that can resume to lockdown, there's a legal way to fight: boxing/ perfectly legal. A guy from the Olympics who won the gold medal for boxing delivered a speech to us: He wants us to Box for him if we think we have talent. My nickname is Lil Mike Tyson. Trust me, I've earned that name. His boxing crew has a catch. All of his boxers have been incarcerated. And changed. That's what I intend to do.

-Troy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's been inspiring to read your latest round of writings, to see how much looking in you've been doing to try and understand who you are and what you need to make your way in this world. We are looking forward to your next dispatch... and we want ringside seats!

Locked Down

Been' locked down is hard, because since I was thirteen that's when I first caught my case. When I first hit my first house lick. I got caught with my friends, and we got charged with attempted burglary. And I came here to Juvenile Hall for a coupe of days. When I got out, I was smoking weed, popping ecstasy pills, and when I stopped poppin' pills, I caught another case. About a year afterwards I got caught for attempted robbery. And I stayed here for at least three months.

Then they sent me to a group home, and I ran from it. Bein' stupid, I got caught up here for another case. And the rest of my life has been in and out of jail. Wondering why I hit that first house lick. As I sit in here now, I'm thinking I should never have run from that group home.

I got my brother up from camp writing to me, and he said I was stupid for getting caught up for that case, but that I should pimp wherever they send me. I know I never shoulda popped that pill and got caught for it. Now I'm here wondering why and thinking how if I didn't I wouldn't be here now. And if I wouldn't have been riding with a drunk man named KT.

I had went to court on the 18th and they told me to come back on the 31st and they might let me go home on Family Preservation, And I met with my mom and my PO today to see if I was gonna be able to leave on Family Preservation.

And he said that he would accept me. When I go to court on the 31st, They might release me!

-Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Alex, when you first came to the Hall you regretted your crime, now you regret running. Don't do something else that you will regret. The lesson here is to think before you make the mistake. Whatever the conditions of your probation or placement - think before you act. Follow this advice and you'll be fine. You are a smart guy, make smart decisions.

Death Row at 12:01

What could you actually possibly say to this person,
how could you make everything okay?

Me personally I can't go to someone who is facing death
knowing that same day they are going to die.

The only thing they have at that moment is their memories past,
present,
that's it.

So there it is.

At 12:01 they die and their family's cries will be heard
throughout the city they live in.

-Real One, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right. There it is. What else can be said?

Oxymora

A deafening picture

Of silence

The colors blend

In defiance

Screaming bloody murder

The science

Is Oxymora

The colors

Are shades of blood

The victim of this horror

Is a boy named Johnny

Captive of so many drugs

It's just so sorry

-Johnny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Stories that include a drug dependency are never pretty. You've painted us a picture of this scene. Tell us more what happened to Johnny? Why? Was there anything he could have done to escape this fate?

How Does It Feel Knowing

If I sat down and talked with Donald Beardslee right before he died, I would have asked him: How does it feel to leave earth knowing that the only thing people remember you as, is a nobody who died for killing two women?

-Lil' Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A harsh reminder to the rest of us to check out exactly how meaningfully we're spending our time on earth.

**The most important
thing is identifying
the problem, and
I have a temper
problem identified,
how can I solve it?**

Lately

I've been thinking about you a lot lately
 Hoping you are out there safely
 I know you may hate me
 But maybe
 It's better for you and me

I've been missing you a lot lately
 I know everyone can relate to me
 But I stay solid even if it hurts me
 But maybe
 It's better for you and me
 I've been hurting a lot lately
 Wondering why did I let you escape me
 I still can't see
 But maybe
 It's better for you and me

I've been stressing a lot lately
 Can't sleep but I know it's just me
 Times to just speak
 But maybe
 It's better for you and me

I've been dreaming about you a lot lately
 Hopin to neva wake up faithfully
 Baby I'm still here waiting
 But maybe
 It's better for you and me

I've been waiting a lot lately
 Wishing for our baby
 It might sound crazy
 But maybe
 It's better for you and me

I've been thinking, missing, hurting,
 stressin'
 dreaming and waiting a lot lately
 Because you saved me
 But maybe
 It's better for you and me

-Jepeabo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another moving and crafted poem from one of our favorite Poets. This is great JePeabo, even with its sadness. Don't stop!

Got To Respect Fireball

What it be like? Man, nothing here. Just keepin' a low profile up here at Camp, feel me?

But I just wanted to let Fireball know how much game she got! That shhh she be sayin' be real, and a ninja can't do nothing but respect her mind, feel me! I'm lookin' forward to seeing her writing in The Beat.

But that's really it, feel me. I just wanna let Fireball know that it's something better in life than hoeing, feel me. I'm gon' keep it real — every piece that you wrote and I read went dumb! You should make a book or something, feel me? Turn that mouthpiece into something! It might get you somewhere.

-Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It seems like there always comes a certain point where our best writers recognize our best writers, and offer each other support in the pages of our 'zine. What you write is so true! Fireball has been coming through with blazing truth for a good while now; and we'd love to see her book, telling stories of what it took to stay, the price she had to pay, and what it took to leave — all the blessings of which she has not yet received! But she's received a few, like this piece of true praise from you.

Close To Death

What's up? How y'all doin'? I just want to say what's up to my people.

I've been close to death so many times! I ain't brangin' bull. Sometimes I laugh in the face of danger! I'm seventeen, but I should have died when I was sixteen — got shot! But I walked wit' Jesus: Came back to life! Walked the same day! That had to be God, it couldn't be fate.

Man, this weekend, my cousin damn near got killed by some foo's. But his gun had to be old, 'cause it jammed! So somebody else might be close to death, 'cause when you pull a gun out and don't use it — you askin' for it!

-Moe Butter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your second paragraph gets it all right! You were brought back to life by the mercy of a loving God, thank you Jesus. So it's on you to show your gratitude with a change of life. But your last paragraph, is so twisted with sick thinking that you've got our hearts sinking! If your cousin kills in revenge, then he might as well have met his end. Why not see that jammed gun as God saving one of his beloved children? Then show gratitude, not a stone-cold killer's attitude. You feel? Heal.

Teach With Words and Deeds

What's up Beat? I'm here at Camp, and I just got back from the new juvenile hall being built right next door to the old one and next door to us Camp. It's going to be finished late 2006 or early 2007.

It will cost one hundred and thirty-five million dollars to build, and it will have three hundred plus, rooms. They are working hard on it as I speak, or should I say as I write? Everybody from Alameda County in the Hall and CYA, look after your younger brothers, because if you don't give them good advice — they will go meet the new Hall!

I'm trying to get my high school diploma. I'm going to start school on the outs. I already took my GED, but I'm still waiting for the scores. I hope I passed! Because I need to get a job to be able to pay my restitution — I owe racks! And I don't want my parents to keep paying for my shhh, because I'm already eighteen and I'm not a kid anymore — I'm "a grownazz man" (as my baby Yvette says).

I love you, baby; and I'll show you that I will do right and never go to jail ever again! Everybody that has someone special, take care of them, because they will be there — along with your family! The people that really love you, will stick around through thick or thin, through rough or smooth.

-Krusher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on with your message of caring, from beginning to end. Thanks for giving us a heads up on the new Hall, and yeah — time for our readers to give their little brothers (and sisters) some good advice for a change; and none of that do-what-I-say-not-what-I-do stuff either! Props on the GED. We bet you passed, and if not — next time for sure! How 'bout a job with The Beat? But the main thing is to follow through on that promise to Yvette: do right and no more jail! Just smooth sailing.

**The people that
 really love you, will
 stick around through
 thick or thin,
 through rough or
 smooth.**

Confused Soul

twisting and turning
my soul got lost
inside it's burning
trying to find the cause
there's someone i like
and someone i love
still tryin'a find which one
to kiss and hug
got one on my mind
that i should put above
but i don't want to
make a mistake
and end up getting hurt
all because of faith
that's why my soul is confused
feel like my soul is
tortured and abused
asking a guardian angel
to help me out one time
so i can get focused
and free my mind
my soul feels damaged
feels like i'm getting
attacked by a savage
both of them look cute
but which one's the baddest
well i'll let you know
when i'm not confused no mo'
but for now i'm gon'
take everything slow

-Guyen Viet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even taking it slow won't guarantee no one gets hurt, you know? But praying for clarity of mind and heart, is a good place to start. If faith is the issue, pick the one who trusts you most. And when you trust her in return, and you won't be burnt toast.

AIDS

I'm writing today about a disease that affects my everyday life as well as the lives of many others. My mama's now suffered from AIDS for a long time.

It hurts me every night — having the thought of her dyin' at any moment! And it hurts now as I write this. I'd give my life willingly, no regret, to find a cure for her — even though it feels like death is just watching.

-Trevor, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you write here isn't crazy. Far from it! So often we hear, "I'd kill for those I love." A coward might do so willingly. But the courage it takes to "give my life willingly" for another — now that shows love! That's a prayer that rattles the gates of heaven and has the angels weeping by her bedside.

**my auntie
has AIDS and
sometimes she
gets very, very
sick and skinny**

Same Old Same

Man, I'm back here in the Hall's pre-Camp unit because I ran from Camp — something I both thought and said I'd never do! It's such an easy program, and I had a lot of stuff going for me — and I messed it up.

I don't know — but I was just hella stressing; and I got tired of going and seeing my son for the weekend, then just leaving him there all week! I felt like at Camp I was doing nothing for my son, and my mom was doing everything — and I should be making money for him! So I went back to my old ways: get money anyway I can.

I thought I was doing the right thing, and it felt so right, buying him stuff, being with him and his mother all night — taking care of them! But I realized I should have waited till I finished what I had to do, then try to do all that — because I'm doing nothing for him now! And now I can't see him at all! I miss him hella much and want to do right by him.

I used to talk about how much I put my parents through — and I did it again! I don't know how I can make it up to them now. I can't just say, "I'm sorry," 'cause I've said it too many times! All I can do is keep doing the right things from now on.

-Lil' Bam-Bam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It must have felt so good and so right while you were playing husband, father and provider for your own little family, but it was a fool's paradise that couldn't last — not with you out on the grind and a warrant out for your arrest. But you know that now, so you plan to grind after you finish your juvenile commitment. Wrong again: same old same! You've got to get a legitimate hustle, even if you're helping financially less than you'd like to be — 'cause it's the only way you'll stay free to be a live-in husband and father. Provide what you can, when you can, in terms of money, but only by doing right; so you can provide all the love and attention your son needs from his father — if, that is, you truly "want to do right by him!"

The Other Side

Here today, gone tomorrow.

All we see is hate and rage

What we want to see...

But what about the other side

The other side that's pure with glee

But why we do this, I don't understand

What happens tomorrow, we don't plan

So, please consider what you've read

And try to think past what's in your head

So look at me through different eyes

And see that I've become more wise

-OJ Simpson, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for showing us the two sides, like you say, there's more to you than rage or the mistakes you've made... there's also a strong, caring, hurting person who just wants a good life. What can you do to keep trying to strengthen that side of yourself, even while you're in the system?

I Would Cure AIDS

The disease that I would cure is AIDS, because if you get diagnosed with it, you can't do anything about it. You can just live until a certain point that you get very sick and have to sit in the hospital.

But they can't do anything either besides tell you the bad news, which doesn't help, it just gets you scared. And you already know what bad news I am talking about. The news when they tell you how long you have to live.

The reason why I would cure this disease is because my auntie has AIDS and sometimes she gets very, very sick and skinny. But then she starts eating and she begins to get more and more fatter...

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: AIDS is one of the most destructive diseases in the country, and we're sorry to hear that your Auntie is facing it. Are you close to her? What does she say about it? She's in our prayers. We do need a cure.

Conversation With Death

good afternoon death
 how's life treating you
 oops — i forgot
 you never did have a life
 but all the people you've taken
 they had lives
 they had families
 they had some things
 going for themselves
 might not have been
 the happiest and most
 enjoyable of situations
 that people was living in
 but they had something going
 so why did you take them with you
 are we so bad that we don't
 deserve to live or even
 reside in this world
 holla jesus —
 but i ask one thing
 don't take my parents
 or if you must
 let me get my parents back
 in my next life time
 because know it or not
 we all live again

-Kunta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'll all live again when death shall die, and graves give up their righteous and mercy descend from the sky. And choirs of angels sing songs that conquer death — of love that stays strong beyond life's last breath.

good afternoon
 death
 how's life
 treating you
 oops — i forgot
 you never did
 have a life

Times I Can Tell

Cryin' at night,
 looking at his casket,
 fighting with mom,
 finally the outcome,
 running down the street.
 Tryin' to get away,
 away from what,
 that's the question.

-Teletubie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good question. Stop running. Look at what you're running from. Face it — and then there will be no need to run anymore.

Krazy Legs and The Beat Talk About HIV/AIDS

[K = Krazy Legs; B = The Beat Within]

B — Has anyone in your family ever died of a disease?

K — No, not that I know of.

B — Well, today The Beat's talking about cures. Is there anything you'd want to cure?

K — I would cure HIV, because too many people are dyin'.

B — Without a cure, to be real, what can you do to make sure you and your homies don't get HIV/AIDS?

K — Use condoms.

B — That's easy. Right? If it's so easy, why don't you use them?

K — I don't like to use condoms because it takes away the feelin'. I want to get all my feel.

B — Okay, but if you're sick as hell: puking, red spots all over your body, no appetite — is that what you want to feel?

K — Hell no!

B — Well that's what AIDS is like. What about this: You don't get tested, you've got HIV, and you pass it to a girl you love! Is that what you want to feel?

K — If I found out I had HIV/AIDS, I would kill myself, because if I gave it to someone I love, I wouldn't know what to do or feel.

B — So in that case, you'd want to go back in time and use a condom. Right?

K — Yes.

B — This is your lucky day, my friend.

K — How?

B — Because you are back in time, and it's not too late.

K — That's true.

-Krazy Legs, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To add another voice from the 'B' side, we know people who, with proper medical care, have lived twenty years and counting, with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), who practice safe sex in order not to spread the disease, and who can expect to continue to live full and productive lives so long as they take proper care of themselves under medical supervision — and find emotional strength through joining HIV/AIDS peer-support groups. If, God forbid, you ever did get HIV/AIDS, don't kill yourself! Seek help, information and support!

WHY?

Why am I in a position that's real messed up?

Why am I looked at as a carjacker w/a pistol and pump?

Why does the DA want to play me?

Why doesn't he understand that these times are shady?

Why would they try to send me to the pen?

Why are they trying to bring my life to an end?

Why does the judge act like an ass?

Why, was he the nerd of his class?

Why do I go so dumb?

Maybe going dumb avoids these answers, and makes me go numb?

-Classified, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a great last line at the end of a great poem. So what do you think? Do you think it's easier to be numb than to face the answers to all these questions? What part of all of this do you yourself control.

Box

Do you know how it feels to be put in a box,

trying to fight, to get out of the box?

It takes time and you can't breathe. You can suffocate...

You can't get out, but I found a way:

Writing.

-Flip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a powerful metaphor, Andre. And we can tell each week that your writing gets a little bigger, a little more free. Keep fighting your way out of the box!

My Life

During my past years, I haven't been smart about my incidents. I have good and bad, but my mind was lost. Now I'm back on track and willing to change — to make something out of my life!

My name is Alexander, raised in Hayward — a young man willing to make sacrifices and go on in life. During my last couple of years, I didn't exactly make wise choices, but I have redeemed myself and have made changes. I'm proud of what I have accomplished already, but I have a long way to go.

It all started when I used to go to school, back in the days. I used to make myself believe that no one had control over me. I had up's and downs, but did actually achieve a lot of methods — but my life was going downhill. I couldn't believe how I had become, in such a short amount of time!

I didn't learn though. I ended up getting kicked out of school and almost didn't make it to my graduation — but an important person gave me a chance to graduate with my class! And I was doing good for several weeks.

Then it all seemed like a nightmare. I left my pad and went to my 'hood — messed up like I never had before! Got locked up for my first time, with several charges. Got sentenced to placement, but that didn't help.

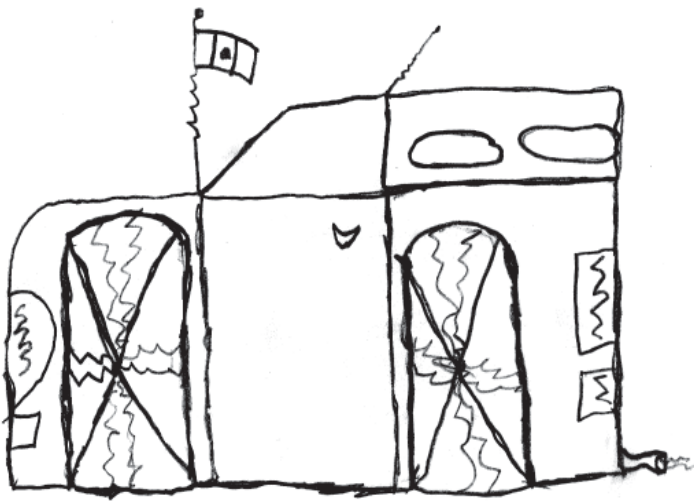
I kept messing up! Went through a lot of pain and drama to come to understand what was best for me — but by then, it was too late!

I got busted in March, did nine months and got released. Not even two weeks later — I'm back in jail — this time looking at serious time! And now I find myself wondering how I could let myself down like that.

But now my mind is focused to succeed in life. And when I do get out, I'll make sure life is easier for me — and change it for the better.

-Alexander, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Choosing to do the right thing is often simple but not easy. If you're addicted to drama, then "simple" is already a hard one for you to do! Also, it can be hard avoiding temptation. And doing the right thing can involve a lot of hard work. But really you've already begun the hardest work, which is changing your head and heart. We can feel from your words that you have already accomplished a lot in that regard, but we're sure that you're right when you insist that you have a long way to go. Change is really an inside job. Change how you think and act, and the world around will begin to change, too — at least for you! Everything will begin to look different, even the same old same.



I Would Have Asked Donald Beardslee Many Questions

If I were to have had the chance to talk to Donald Beardslee before he got executed by the State of California, I would have asked him, "How do you feel right now?"

I would ask him if he believes in hell and heaven, and if his response was "Yes," then I would ask him, "Where do you see yourself? At hell or heaven?" And then I would ask him if he prayed a lot over these past years, or if he just stopped caring about God.

I would ask him if he were never to have killed those two women, then where does he see himself at right now on the outs? And I would ask him if he regrets ever killing them — and why did he do it?

I would ask him, did he cry the night before he was going to get executed? Then I would ask him, what are going to be his last words before he gets executed? And what advice would he give to the new generation? So that we don't die the way he is!

-Obaid, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a wonderfully thoughtful piece, full of really important questions. It makes us wish, if he had been willing to talk, that you could have actually asked them questions and reported his answers. On the other hand, just reading your questions — makes us examine our own lives, beliefs, and values.

I would ask him, what are going to be his last words before he gets executed? And what advice would he give to the new generation? So that we don't die the way he is!

Love Me For Me!

I need real love not that fake stuff.
I need a girl that's down to ride or die.
I want her to love me for me, not cause I'm a lil' g
I want her to love me for me not cause
I got them new Jordans on my feet.
I know you like them thugs in them white t's
But baby could you just love me for me,
Not 'cause I got all that green in my MFG Gibo
Jeans.

I need that special girl
The one I could give the world.
Love is real, love is me
But girl you don't
Love me if you're here
For my green

-Lil' Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's some of the realest. You know that you met that right one when you come to realize that she is with you for you and not for what you got. Your words are power our friend. Stay preaching life.

Lets Talk About Keeping It Real!

Why people be fronting acting like they the real deal
don't asks me

I'm just real as they come
never fake and I always goin' dumb.

So you say you're real, but what do that mean?

Does it mean that you play both roles,
but I don't play games

see my picture in that big picture frame.

Are you trying to get some fame or trying to earn a
name

or are you just playing a dead end game?

Call it what you want, take it how you feel.

See me on the outs and I'll show you that I'm real
so what do you see happening if you keep on keeping
it real?

What do you see happing in your future days?

Me living good
taking care of my kids

fat little house,
doing it real big

wifey on the side,
with that g-ride

Away from the streets!

Away from police!

Making the violence cease!

That sounds right to me!

-Lil' Whoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a style that will make so many say "WHOA" if you were to just stay exercising this talent we know as "writing." Remember, a great writer is one that can relate to anyone and anything. continue to study that.

Lung Cancer, AIDS and Murder

If I were to pick a topic tonight, it would be to find a cure for all types of sicknesses and cancers, even AIDS — because anyone could catch one of these things.

I would find a cure for lung cancer, because a lot of people in my family smoke cigarettes, and if it were possible to cure lung cancer then nobody would die from smoking. But the first cure I would invent would be for AIDS and HIV, because anyone could catch AIDS — and they wouldn't even know it unless they got tested!

I know it will be hard for people to go get tested, because a lot of people will be scared. They'll be afraid that they are going to find out they got AIDS. Like me, I'm scared to go get tested, because I know the answer might change my whole life!

It would be the best thing if people in our town would stop killing other people, 'cause it's hard for people to lose one of their loved ones! I have lost a friend in San Leandro. He got shot over a stupid fight with his little brother and the shooter!

If I were to sell guns, I would sell them only to people that I know who are responsible and who have the common sense not to shoot nobody over a fight or some stupid shhh!

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got your heart in the right place, and we appreciate your serious and insightful approach to the topic. But man, you need to get your HIV test; because if you did test positive for HIV, then with medical treatment you'll never have to suffer from full-blown AIDS! But if you have it and don't know it, you don't get the help you need to keep it under control. And, also, imagine your relief when the test comes back negative.

A Drug To Cure AIDS

If I was to find a cure for an incurable disease, well — it wouldn't be incurable anymore! And I would have made the key to solving the problem of people worrying about a short life span if they are HIV-positive. What is the key? The "HIV Redeem" will be the answer for anybody who asks!

But just so people won't think, "What's the use of wearing a condom then?" There would still be some undesirable symptoms for those using this new drug. For example, you might have less of a chance of having twins. Or, maybe your back would swell up for a certain length of time so that you can't stroke no more!

In other words, just because there's a cure, it won't mean that people should stop taking care of themselves. This would probably be the type of cure where someone would have to go through all of the stages of having the disease — and when it finally goes through its last step, then the drug would go into effect and cure you!

So you would have to go through the trouble of going to the doctor regularly and seeing how you're doing, because I know you couldn't tell what stage it's on by just looking at yourself. And that's just so people would know that getting a disease is nothing to be proud of just because you know it's a cure out there!

People will need to realize that every person's word ain't bond, and you might think you could trust somebody — but you can't. And don't let yourself get caught up in the moment because she's cute, or you ain't had none it in a while! Those sorts of things are what make you think like, "I want to kill that broad!" Or, "I should stab that ninja!"

All this cure does is give you a second chance to observe certain things that people say to you and what they do to get the full you because half won't do!

-Tyree, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We understand your concern that creating a cure for AIDS might make carriers of the virus less responsible, or those without the virus less cautious about getting it. It is a serious concern. However, designing a drug to first punish and then cure, and intentionally require the infected to make many costly doctor visits to achieve your desired goal of socially responsible behavior, does not properly speaking belong in the realm of medicine. Moreover, in third world countries where doctors are few and far between, in sub-Saharan Africa for example, you'd be condemning how many millions to death? Let medical science simply cure, and social engineering remain a political issue. There are some who believe AIDS is a fatal plague sent by heaven to punish sinners, but neither should such a belief impinge on medical science's responsibility to pursue a cure.

**Away from the
streets!
Away from police!
Making the
violence cease!**

When I'm Free

Sometimes I sit back and think — what would I be doing if I were free? I always think that right about now, I would be out with my baby's mama buying things for my boy that is on the way.

I been here for four months now, and I bought a couple of things for him before I got here — but now there's only two-and-a-half months before he is born! And I didn't have the chance to buy him everything I wish I had, and that makes me feel bad in a way.

So if I were free right now, I would buy him everything he needed. I know it would bring me joy to get him the things he needs — and just by looking at his toys or tiny clothes, it would make me forget about all my problems and troubles!

I would leave all my past life to give my son an opportunity at a life better than the one I had. I would be at my wife's side, so we could raise our child together in a happy home — a home and a life which he deserves!

-Rob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now we don't know, but weren't some of the things you did in the "past life" you'd be willing to leave behind for the sake of your son — weren't they done to get money to buy him things? We know that's the downfall of a lot of young fathers who are halfway ready to leave the risk and crime of their old grind, 'cause the pleasure of showing up laden with gifts makes them slip. The problem is that it ends in the young child losing the most important thing a father has to give — his time and loving attention. In the long run, money will come on the do-right path; but too many fall for the temptation of getting it fast. And what can you do for your son in here? So quit your criminal career to be that do-right father when you're free and clear.

To Everyone

What's up? This is yo' boy, Devanae, taking time out to talk to you about some of the crimes that are happening in Oakland. The most destructive crime that is far too common in Oakland is — murders!

There are other crimes out there, and I have been out committing some of them myself, but my main focus right now is — the murders that are happening in our communities. I know that everyone out there has lost someone in their family that was close to them — and if you haven't, you will, eventually you will.

Every time someone is killed, that's a person losing someone that they love and care about with all of their heart! I should know — I recently lost someone in my family over something that could have been prevented.

I just hate it when people die over some of the littlest things, like dope for one. My cousin was beaten to death by two police officers over some come creek! The only thing that I'm trying to tell you, is to live life the best way you can, because life is short. You could be here one minute and gone the next!

To everyone — be safe, and make the best of your life.

-Devanae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are a lot of murders in Oakland over dope — dope money, dope turf, dope deals that go bad. No one should be dying for drug sales, by the hands of gangsters, police or anyone else. Anyone out on the corner selling dope, knows he's putting his life at risk; but after hundreds or thousands of times of getting away with it, he begins to feel like it just won't happen to him. There are other ways to make money, especially when you're getting on in your teen years. If you treat it like a life or death issue, when you're out looking for a job that's legit — you won't quit trying till you find it! If you get ninety-nine no's and one yes — that's all you need to get out of the mess!

Back In YGC

What's up with The Beat? This me, Young CD back in YGC holdin' it down. But I'm 'bout to get out soon, so I ain't trippin'.

I can't wait till I get out. I'm gon mobb it out, but at the same time I'm gon do my probation and finish this once and for all 'cause I ain't got no time to be back and forth to jail. CD 'bout to get his bread and finish school for real.

There's hellu stuff happening out there so I'm gon tuck low for awhile so my enemies won't know I'm home, and I'll be able to get my mind right.

-Young CD B5, SFYGC

From The Beat: This gives us such hope for your future, Young CD. It worries us that you still want to "Mobb it out," but as long as you stay off the street, do your program, finish school and get your mind right, you're going to find lots of doors opening for you. You'll be facing lots of temptations, so keep your eyes on the prize and stay strong.

From Miracle Kid to Robber

When I was twelve years old, I was walking down the streets of 74th, by Eastmont Mall, and this drunk person was driving — and he lost it! He went to jail for five or six years. When he got out, he went back a week later for something worse.

I almost died that day! When I got to the ER, the doctor thought I was not going to make it. They said that I'd lost a lot of blood and that both my legs were crushed. But I was blessed that day! I thought I was the miracle kid!

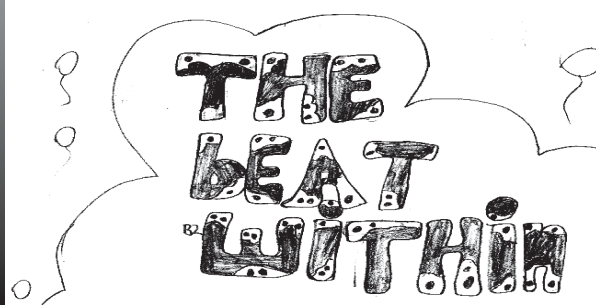
It took me a year to learn how to walk again. I had to have about thirteen or fourteen surgeries. When I got out of the hospital, I started doing a lot of things: smoking weed, shooting dice, and drinking — just because of the people I was hanging out with.

I was a kid that did not get shoes. And like every two weeks, I'd look at my friends and think, "Man, I'd like to be like them someday!" So I just started robbin' a lot of people just to get the money, just to be like my friends with a new things everyday.

I was getting good at robbin' people, and so I just started doing it everyday. It was hard to stop, because I was getting the things my mom could not get for me. But now I am in jail just waiting to get out so I can change my life around and say, "Sorry," to my family for hurting them.

-Patrick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You were "the miracle kid"! Though we have no doubt that the miracle also entailed a lot pain and courage and hard work on your part. And maybe you felt like the world owed you something, so you fell into taking what you wanted. For sure, getting fast money and buying new things everyday, is a hard habit to break. But now that you see it will break you if you don't break it first — you have a good chance at changing your life around, and making that miracle blossom into a life full of love and good will. Freedom means a lot more than a new pair of Jordans, whatever the young G's on their way to jails and penitentiaries will tell you.



The Beat

I pucker up my lips
To summon the solar cleptic of the sonic
eclipse
The normal and the twisted
The dull and the gifted
Apocalypse
Sick shhh
Organic
Artistic
Misfit
OK it's a given
I been driven to hell and back
I got an empty wallet
And mind full of raps
Just stealin' the fiscal facts
And understanding the syntax
Relax it's only me
Brotha eccentricity
Impregnating necessity
My lady gets the best of me
Erratic
Pathetic
Complexity
I'm a child of destiny
But I can't sing a lick
In fact my only lucrative asset is I'm able
To talk shhh and pass it off like it's
poetic
My life is hella hectic
I adapt like a liquid
Despite the vicious mischief of aluminum
intentions
I'm bent all out of shape
Procrastinatin' my fate
Awaiting simple symbols of a nimble
magistrate
It's just a lack of us
AJAX a bust
Invincible
Indivisible
A super powered lust

-Ajax, San Mateo

From The Beat: Though it's not easy to make sense of this intelligent and witty piece, we can see that your creativity has a firmer grip on itself than a kitten's leash. You use million dollar words and plant ideas that make the brain soar like birds. Deciphering this poem is more difficult than remembering the name to each herb because we never heard some of these words. But who are we to want to understand a masterpiece written by master poet. We appreciate this great piece, but we couldn't piece it together and just wanted you to know it.

**I'm bent all out
of shape
Procrastinatin'
my fate
Awaiting simple
symbols of a nimble
magistrate**

My Business Plan

I would like to open up a restaurant. I would better the community because I would try and hire the people from the community to work for me. I would make it a nice place to sit, talk and eat.

I think I would open a restaurant in Chinatown because they are always packed. I would also do some other things for the community by building some nicer apartment buildings so that people could live comfortably.

-Eric YTEC, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This sounds like a dream you can make come true, Eric. It will require some commitment on your part (to finish your education and learn about what you need to start a business), and some skills (can you cook?), but we think you could make a very nice living with this business. Not only that, we are looking forward to having a very nice meal. If we were eating at your restaurant, what dish would you recommend?

**Without this power they are
merely exactly what they
physically appear to be – hot air.**

Words

Words have power, but only because people give them power. Words are at times more powerful than any physical force on earth. Words at times can break, words at times can make. Words can be so extraordinary, they can leave a crowd agape. But like I said before words, have only the power that people are willing to give them. Without this power they are merely exactly what they physically appear to be – hot air.

-Gq, 150 Crew

From The Beat: GQ, you've got a good point here. Sometimes words are just hot air, but, they also have the potential to bring Hitler to power, to make enemies fall in love – and to express what you are telling us here. Without someone composing words into sentences and without someone reading or hearing these words, they are powerless. So, with that said. Keep writing; continue to give words meaning, and we will be listening.

My Cool Businesses To Help My Community

If I started a business to help my community, it would be real expensive, but it would be cool. It would have midnight basketball, pool, a swimming pool, and games, maybe even a few sport leagues. It would have a studio that's real deep, compared to others.

You could also get your hair done for a low price by a boy or girl. You could also get some clothes, actual shhh that we would wear, though. It would be a place of peace. There would be programs where the place takes the kids to Squires, and amusement parks, and have speakers from the community.

It would also help with school work, teach kids how to get jobs, make resumes, all the fundamentals of life. It would be a real positive place, but what would draw people is how cool it is. Thugs to squares'll come. It'll keep the kids off the streets and the staff'll have to be politically conscious to trickle it into the youngstas' minds.

-Al-Bo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What beautiful ideas you have incorporated into your business, Al-Bo! What kinds of community speakers would you invite? How would you guarantee that it would remain a place of peace? Why do you think so many poor communities lack a peaceful place where kids can do their homework and get help with it, a sports complex, swimming pools, training courses that prepare them to make a decent living like cooking, carpentry, electronics, cosmetology, printing, dressmaking, auto mechanics, money management, and so much more? How do you think your life would be different if there had been such a place when you were coming up?

To My Samoan Princess

This is an ode to my light-skinned beauty
Who has a huge heart and a nice soft booty.

Your eyes shine like soft white pearls;
And it makes me so happy to know that you're my girl.

You are so nice and sweet;

Every time I see you, you sweep me off my feet.

You're that one girl lurking in my dreams;

The one who pleases me if you know what I mean.

You're an athlete shooting and stealing my heart;

I'll try to hold onto you so that we may never part.

You're very intelligent and very bright;

But I'll watch out for your left hook, and your right.

You make me complete and feel like a real man;

I'll do my absolute best to hold onto you as long as I can.

You're that one special woman that I love;

That our Heavenly Father has sent to me from above.

I can't wait to please you and hold you tight;

To comfort you every single night.

You're a tropical flower from an island out in the ocean;

Your unmatched beauty is swift like the wind in motion.

I want you to stay in my life to love and adore;

To be my Samoan Princess now, and forever more.

-Your Samoan Prince, San Mateo

From The Beat: A poem that's truly from the heart, but is that heart experiencing love or lust? As men we know what's our high priority, so in the second line of a beautiful poem we have to mention her butt. But what makes a man go crazy over a woman and pull outrageous stunts? Is it because they see a future with this person, or is it just the excitement in the hunt? We hope you will be free with her, so your fantasies can come true. Plus, if they keep you from a woman for too long, who knows what you might do?

No More RJP's

I read The Beat and I came across your piece and you were talking about someone talking about Lil' Boxer in the RIP issue. I was the one who put his name on there. I'm from San Francisco. That was one of my close homies, and he will be truly missed and always be thought of.

My advice to you, if you don't want to end up like your cousin, that you get out the game before you get too deep. I don't want no homies, lil' brothers, lil' sisters or lil' cousins to end up like that. Even if they were older I wouldn't want them to be dead, even if I really don't know them.

So what I'm saying is keep yo' head up and do what you got to do in order to get up out of the system.

Holla back.

-Lil' Ct B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree, Pengo. We are heartsick when we read in issue after issue how many young people are paying with their lives. It's a national disgrace and scandal that, apparently, the nation doesn't care that much about (which is another national disgrace and scandal!). So, friend, what are YOU doing to make sure you, and your close friends, avoid this terrible and deadly trap?

Conversation With The Soon-To-Be Dead

I would want to know what dreams they haven't fulfilled so I could at least make an effort to fulfill them. Then their soul could witness a valuable piece of their dreams be fulfilled.

-Rodney B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What we like about this short piece is that you have genuine concern for the condemned's soul, and a desire to give him peace by fulfilling his dreams. What a good heart you must have!

Until There's A Cure

I would cure AIDS, just for the fact that too many people are dying of AIDS, and that it is a widely spread disease in this world. There is no cure for AIDS, and that should make people want to use condoms. It's not just AIDS, it's many other diseases that are in this world that can't be cured.

It would change the whole world if someone found the cure for AIDS because it would lower the death rate dramatically. Everyone in the world would benefit from AIDS being cured because it's a disease that is all over. In my 17 years on this earth, I've know one lady that was in her 30's living with AIDS for about two years. It was a shame because she had two kids, and it is sad that they have to live with the fact that their mom has AIDS and that she could die any day.

That's the issue with AIDS and any other disease that can't be cured. You could be a billionaire or the richest man or lady on earth, but in a blink of an eye, everything can be taken away from you — your money, your family and all your materialistic things, but most importantly, your LIFE!

-Bugsy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, it will be a great benefit to the world when someone discovers a cure for AIDS. You're absolutely right that AIDS is no respecter of wealth or race. One of the first very public people to die of AIDS was a movie star (Rock Hudson). Magic Johnson has all the money and fame in the world, but he can't cure his AIDS. Would you ever be interested in working on the cure? Can you imagine going to medical school and learning the ins and outs of virus transmission, detection and eradication? We know you've got what it takes to be that doctor, we just don't know if your interests take you in that direction.

Time

What happens when you want it go by fast?

Does it go by slow?

But should it?

Let me guess why it must be this way

Sitting there thinking about the past

Doesn't it make you feel more like dog doo-doo

Than what you already felt like

Will this feeling go away?

Should I change my act at this point in life?

How will people look at me then?

Do I care what they think?

Should I even think about that?

I guess we just have to find out while the clock is ticking

-Medicine, San Mateo

From The Beat: We've got our own answers to some of the questions you pose, but it's you who need to answer them. Do you think you should change your act? Do you care what others think? Time moves slowly while you're locked up, and as a result you have plenty of time to meditate on those questions. Who are you? Who do you want to be?

**My advice to you, if you don't
want to end up like your cousin,
that you get out the game before
you get too deep.**

Crying and Flaunted

Manifested by weeping and mourning
That inside is scarred by emotions
That were torn away by a specific adorning
Made by jerking the heart's motions.
Feasting on crumpled past thoughts
Invented when love was on thy side
Giving, of most affection what's brought
To lie down and settle for the ride.
Bumping and racking out of place,
Yearning again to be wanted,
Tossed away by a selfish whip of blades
Diving into the flesh, crying and flaunted.

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem moves toward a more modern syntax, and seems less antique than a contemporary "high style" (other than the use of "thy"). A unique and abrupt power is brought by eliding grammatical subjects altogether, whereby verbs jerk the reader forward. Moreover according to earlier poetic convention, codified since the Eighteenth Century, the first word in a line should not begin with a trochee (stress on the first syllable), rather the stress should come on the word's second syllable—an iamb; by this formal abuse, however, you add to the impression of jerking the reader forward, in imitation of your poem's theme: "made by jerking the heart's motion."

Excellence At Its Best

Wanting to be comforted
But getting nothing in return;
Pulling away from the contest and forfeiting,
Letting the pleasure sink down and burn.
Immaculacy reaching its peak —
Plowing over and through wrong
To make right that which calls to seek,
Regardless of the while that might be long;
Rising to steadily visualize success
From the universe's point of view,
On top of excellence at its best,
Desired by many, discovered by few.

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is heroic beyond any gangster rap's violent self-indulgence, for it displays the courage of a man with the patience to start over again. Blake once wrote, "The cut worm forgives the plow." And we'd say he means something very like, "Plowing over and through wrong / To make right...." And John Milton wrote "Paradise Lost" for the "fit but few", who would have both the wit and will to visualize success after the Fall (biblically: disobedience in Eden; socially: return to autocratic monarchic rule).

So That Artistic Blood

Bleaching internally and showing no pain
From enduring so much built to be over-flown;
Plush like velvet inside one who is sane,
Multiplies feelings, diving and forming clones
Of evil dehydrated from so much good.
Never glowing on the surface to be brilliant,
Affected and infected by the local neighborhood's
Fairy tales told to hold down one who's diligent.
Expanding the branch on every limb to grow
Bountiful, an amount for knowledge and understanding,
So that artistic blood can take its toll,
Felt by most as boasting and bragging.

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This time your use of enjambment from the fourth to the fifth lines in a poem essentially of consisting of three four-line stanzas, again represents a radical and modern departure from poetic practice which held sway from the Seventeenth until the Twentieth Century in English prosody. In the first stanza your meaning is obscure at best, but by the second, we know exactly what you mean by "affected and infected by local neighborhoods"! We know as well the "fairy tales" to which you allude. Stanza three is your manifesto of independence! Long live the poet who outgrows the stultifying limits of his past — biographical and poetical!

Manifested by weeping
and mourning
That inside is scarred
by emotions

Why Does Love Flee So Often

if you love me why be in denial
i can see in your facial expressions
you want me to caress your vigorous style
after many hurtings i haven't learned my lesson
so close to my partner
i could read her every thought
my feelings growing larger
through the dinner i just bought
does love hate me
why does it flee so often
do i take the wrong approach toward the ladies
is it my sly walking or smooth talking

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Elder (1503 -1542): The following ode is prefaced in the original publication by these words: "The lover sheweth how he is forsaken of such as he sometime enjoyed."

*They flee from me, that sometime did me seek,
With naked foot stalking within my chamber:
Once have I seen them gentle, tame, and meek,
That now are wild, and do not once remember,
That sometime they have put themselves in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range
Busily seeking in continual change.
Thanked be Fortune, it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better; but once especial,
In thin array, after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown did from her shoulders fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small,
And therewithal sweetly did me kiss,
And softly said, "Dear heart, how like you this?"
It was no dream; for I lay broad awaking:
But all is turn'd now through my gentleness,
Into a bitter fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodness;
And she also to use new fangleness.
But since that I unkindly so am served:
How like you this, what hath she now deserved?*



In the Life of Young Money

I was born June 15, 1987 at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland, California. I have two sisters and three brothers. We've all lived in the Bay Area my whole life. My sisters are twenty-two and twenty-five.

When I was twelve, my brother gave me my first gun and boodle of weed, which was a zip of weed; and my first gun was a forty-five. And then, my cousin came to live with us. And when I used to bag up my weed, she used to be in my room. So, one day she bought a dime bag, and she was like, "Do you want to hit it?"

I was like, "I am cool." But she was hittin' it, so I hit it. Then she told me to hold the smoke in, which I did; and when I let it out, she asked me how I felt. I told her I was lit! And ever since then, I've been smoking weed.

And then I stopped selling weed and started selling coke, which makes you more money than weed do. And then me and my cousin, Man from Richmond, started posting on the block twenty-four/seven. We was the only two youngstas getting it. We had cars, everything — clothes, girls!

And when I turned sixteen, me and Man was taking trips to Miami and Atlanta and stuff! So when we came back to the Bay, we found ourselves in a win/lose situation. People started coming up missing, and me and my cousin got caught up on the block.

And that's when it started, coming to the Hall. And then they sent my cousin Man to Camp, and they sent me to a group home in Hayward.

So, you know me, I started selling coke, and I was putting money away for my cousin, Man; because when you at Camp and get home passes, you want money and stuff. So when he needed anything, he came to me to get.

But getting back to the group home thing, I was doing good and stuff. Then a week before I was to go home for good, my mother died of a heart attack — and I ran, to be with my family and stuff.

Two weeks later, I was with Man in Vallejo, getting it. We got caught behind a female. (Part Two coming — RIP Antdees; RIP Red)

-Young Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your mother died of a heart attack so recently? You must still be torn up about it! Surely the court will understand running to be with family at a time like that; but then — did you catch a new case when you got caught up? What a terrible turn of events, to be back on lock up after being so close to freedom, and at the same time to be mourning the loss of your mother! Is your plan to go back to the block and sell rock? It sounds like it when you write, "You know me...." If you know you, you'll see there's no better time to think about changing your life than the present. Have you been reading Man's pieces on this subject? He seems to have gained some real wisdom.

every weekend we
went places, from
shopping to Great
America to LA

The Love of My Life, Mercedes — Part One

It was the summer of 2003. I was at the Spring/PCS store at Hilltop Mall. So, I'm paying for my new cell phone, and this good-looking female walks by the store — looking at me hard!

So, she kept walking, which is cool, because I am putting all my numbers in my new phone. When I was done doing that, I went upstairs to buy some new Forces and fitted hats. So I go in Footlocker to get some all-white Forces and the army-looking Forces. And then that good-looking female comes in the store.

So when I'm done paying for my shoes, I walk up to her and we start talking. I am like, "What's your name?"

And she was like, "Mercedes."

"So how old are you?"

And she was like, "Nineteen."

So we kept talking some more, and I asked her where her dude was. And she was like, "I don't have one."

Then she asked me where my girl was at, and I was like, "I don't have one."

So we still kept talking, and she was like, "Do you want my number?"

I was like, "Yeah!" So we exchange numbers, and we say our goodbyes and stuff.

Then I leave Footlocker to go to the Hat Club, to get me some hats, and my phone starts ringing — and it was Mercedes! Now as I'm shopping, we're talking on the phone. Finally she was like, "What are you doing tonight?"

I was, "Nothing."

Then she was like, "Let's go to dinner and a movie."

So I asked, "What time?"

She was like, "Seven o'clock."

"That's cool." I then gave her directions to my house.

So later as I'm about to leave the mall, it's like four thirty p.m. So I decide to go by Macy's and get some new jeans and button-up shirts to go with my outfit for my date.

When I get home, it's like five forty-five. So I get in the

shower, and when I get out, I iron my jeans and button-up — and now it's seven o'clock on the dot! So I go outside, and there she is in a 2003 Tahoe.

She was like, "You feel like driving?"

I was, "Yeah!"

So we went to Dave-an'-Buster's, at the Great Mall, and we're talking. She was telling me about her past boyfriends and stuff, how-they-used-to-treat-her stuff.

After that, every weekend we went places, from shopping to Great America to LA! So, for the next couple of months, we got to know each other; and this past year we took a trip to New York for two weeks! It was fun, ballin'! (Part Two coming soon. Love you Mercedes. This Young Money and I'm out!)

-Young Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like a whirlwind romance, or even love at first sight. In fact you make it sound almost like a dream come true. Putting this up against your other pieces this week though, we wonder why you kept grinding till you got caught up. If there were ever a time when you should have the motivation to change your life, so you can stay free and do right both by and with this exceptional young Cal student — it is now! And yet, in none of the four pieces you produced for this issue; including two dedicated to "the love of my life" — nowhere do you breathe a hint about a desire to change out of the criminal fast lane. Why not? Is your addiction to the game gonna ruin your new claim to happiness?

I Miss My Dog — Part One

What up, Beat? Just sitting in my cell, listening to Lil' Wayne. I miss my dogs, and I am about to talk about my dog I lost last year. First I would like to say, rest in peace, to my ninja Antdee.

I first met Antdee when I started hustling, and I was out in Bay Point, selling some dope. I guess I was on his block, but instead of him hating — he came up to me and was like, "Get your money!" And I started kicking it with him everyday.

So one day, I needed to recop. So he comes by my auntie's house, and I gave him three hundred and fifty dollars to go get me a zip of weed. While he was going to get it, I stayed at my auntie's house. I got in the shower, because I was just about to go shopping.

So, I'm in the shower for like forty minutes, and as soon as I get out of the shower — my cell phone starts ringing. I answer it, and he's like, "I'm outside." So I go outside, and there he is with a super-fat zip. Now a zip is supposed to weigh twenty-eight grams, but he came back with one weighing forty-two grams — and gave me eighty dollars back!

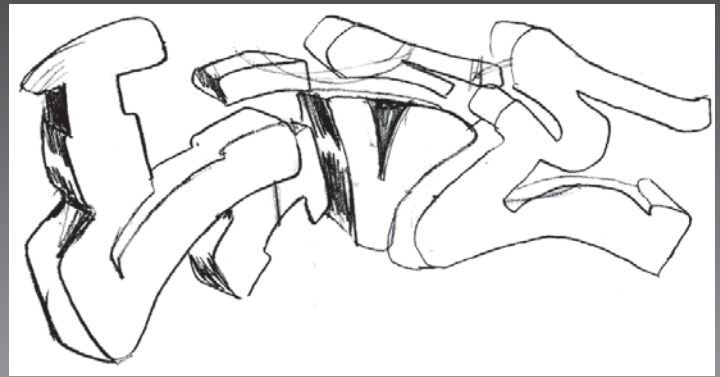
Ever since that day, I not only kicked it hard with him, but everywhere you saw him, you saw me! That was my dog! We met in the summer of 1998. We took trips down South and stuff. We smoked and drank. We did it all.

In October of 2004: me, Antdee and Lil' Carl, we all went to a club in Vallejo. We was so loaded and drunk that Antdee decided to stay in the car to get his head right and stuff. So me and Lil' Carl are inside the club — and I hear a gunshot outside!

So I run outside and look in the car. My dog, Antdee, is slumped over the wheel! I open his door, and he's still alive at this time — and his last word was to look after his son and baby'mama, which I will do until the day I die! (Part Two coming soon. Rest in peace, Antdee: 1984-2004. I love you dog!)

-Young Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Except for sharing your grief, it's hard to respond to this piece, not knowing the circumstances of Antdee getting shot. Maybe you'll reveal more in Part Two. However in other pieces you wrote this week, you reveal that you're about to be a father; and we can say this — for your child's sake, get out of that life! Whether or not Antdee got shot because he was known in the game or had enemies, stay slanging D, guaranteed — both things will happen to you, and you'll be putting the life of your child's one and only father needlessly at risk. In memory of Antdee's dying words, it's time to quit and go legit, so you'll be around for his little family and your own. Or keep slanging, and that road leads to — hospitals, jails and death! (RIP Antdee.)



The Love of My Life, Mercedes

— Part Two

So, over the past year, we got to know each other pretty well. Like I said in Part One, we talk about past boyfriends and girlfriends; how they used to cheat on her, stuff

We talk about family. Her mother's a doctor, and her father's a lawyer — so you know she got money. But, anyway, she goes to Cal. She is a good girl, and she ain't no ripnut (as we call loose females).

So, this past Thanksgiving, at her parents' house, she asked me to marry her! What do you think I said? Yes or no? Well, I am going to let you think about that a min'. Okay ... the answer to that question is — yes! So we plan to get married on June twentieth, which is five days after my birthday. I will be eighteen, and then we will get married in New York City, where most of her family lives.

But let me take a few steps back. She was born in Rise, in New York, and lived there until she was seventeen. Then she moved out to California because her parents owned a lot of land in Vallejo and Concord, California.

So, in July of 2004, I found out that she was pregnant. She is due in March. So other than the day we get married, the day our child is born will be the happiest day of my life! I am looking forward to being a good father.

And with my child also having a good mother, I am only too happy to get off my main topic to talk a little about parenting. I don't know why people have kids, and then they don't be there for them! Me, like I told my wifey's parents — no matter what, I will always be there for my kids.

And her parents love and respect me so much that they are paying for the honeymoon! Me and her father, had been looking at cars and houses. He believes in me, even if no one else did or does. He told me that whatever car I want, I can get; because I have made his baby-girl, as he calls her, very happy. He is in the process of buying us a brand new house in Walnut Creek.

Now I know some people that are reading this, will be hating on yo' boy! But I just shake haters off. That's just how I do it. So when I get out in a couple of months, look for me in a 2005 BMW 755i! I'm out.

-Young Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What do her parents think about your incarceration? What do you think about it? You write that you plan to be there for your child no matter what. Those are brave words, but if you return to incarceration — you simply will not be there for your child while you're locked up, except in pictures, letters, and visits (if you're lucky). Perhaps her parents want to give you that chance to turn your life around. Lots of people choose to grind because they feel they have no other way to survive financially. But you will have no such excuse to put your marriage, fatherhood or freedom at risk through any sort of criminal activity. You feel? We can tell you're impressed by all that money, Young Money. Don't forget to keep the focus on you and learning how to do the right thing — school, job (your own money legitimately earned) and fathering. Best wishes.

**Her parents
love and respect
me so much
that they are
paying for the
honeymoon!**

Crying

I'm falling apart
On the inside
I've run out of places to run and
hide
My heart's drying up
From the tears that I cry
I just want to shrivel up
and die, die, die
life's driving me insane
with the hate I hear everyday
I pray and pray
For a new sign
I'm tired of hearing my voice
And how it always seems to whine
My heart's so broken
From the love that I lost
There's a fire inside
Building up
Building up the rage
That I'm afraid of
I'm afraid of letting it out
'Cause of what it does
There's a place
inside my mind
Where I'm free
From this life
'Cause it's so blind

It doesn't even know
A good person
When he appears
He shows up
In some tore up boots
With a guitar
And a backpack
In his hands
And a bright
Friendly smile
Across his face
It's a disgrace because
No one lets him in
'Cause of how he looks
And moves his hands
He cries at night
Because no one
Knows the real person
Behind the clothes
But he moves on
Trying to find a friend
Not letting people
Be the end
Of his life
'Cause he likes drifting
It's how he began
My life seems to be shifting
Speeding up my game
It all seems the same

I'm a magnet
For a storm cloud
They follow me around
From day to day
I try to find a new way
'Cause I'm tired
Of all this grey
But I can't seem to find
An exit from this life
Without taking it myself
Can somebody help?
I need someone to be
The exit I'm looking for
There's a place in side my brain
A place I try
To hold on to being sane
I cry and cry
But no one seems to care
I look at myself in the mirror
Watching the tears
Fall from my eye
Retracing the steps
Of how they once were dry

-Caos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Caos, why do you feel so hopeless? We hear week after week about this struggle that you are going through. What is it about your life that makes you feel so hopeless? Why do you feel that no one cares? Why do you feel this way?

Will I have to hide When I start to cry?

Love All Over Again

When I look into your eyes
I see the shining stars
They're like crystals
Shining on mars
When I'm near you
I melt like a popsicle
On the first day of summer
I wish I could hold you
In my arms
And treat you like no man has
Without you near
My days are gray
When you look at me
My heart starts to fray
I wish we could be
Together forever
I mourn for you to say
Those three words that kill to hear
If I may
When we are free
To treat you
Like my queen
Dedicated to Mary Poppins

-Caos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Caos, you are quite the romantic when you write about your love. We want to know - what is it about someone that you love that makes you feel this way? What makes someone special to you? What kind of person do you feel attached to? Tell us more about what kind of person touches Caos.

Death

Where do bad folks go
When they die
They don't go to heaven
Where the angels fly
Go to a lake of fire and fry
See 'em again
Till the fourth of July

I don't want to die
'Cause I got so much
But I ask the world why
Does man hide when he cries
It doesn't seem right
For a man to lie

I look in the mirror
And I see a man
With all the same fear
And he looks so queer
That he can't stand straight

If I look at the moon
Will I die too soon
Rotting in a grave
Not looking so gloom

Will I go to the lake of fire and fry
Will I have to hide
When I start to cry?

-Caos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We agree with you, lying never seems right. Why do so many men feel the need to cover up their emotions? A sign of weakness? We don't think so. It seems that it takes courage to cry in front of others. Hiding is not only dishonest, but, cowardly. Ya think? We don't know why things are the way they are - what do you think? Teach us.

Mis Pensamientos Sobre La Muerte

Yo un día soñé que un amigo mío había muerto, pero yo miraba que él me decía a mí, "Ayúdame, que yo no quiero morir," pero yo no podía hacer nada porque él ya estaba casi muerto. Entonces cuando yo me le acerque, él ya se había muerto.

From The Beat: *Que feo sueño. ¿Que pasó al fin? ¿Sigue en vida tu amigo o no? ¿Qué impacto te dió ese sueño? ¿Te hizo querer más a tu vida?*

My Thoughts About Death

One day, I dreamt that a friend of mine had died, but I saw that he was telling me, "Help me, I don't want to die," but I couldn't do anything because he was near death, so by the time I got near him, he had already died.

-Tommy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: *What an ugly dream. What happened in the end? Is your friend still alive in the present or not? What kind of an impact did this dream have on you? Did it make you love your life even more?*

Si Fuera Dios

Si yo fuera Dios por un día, lo único que haría es ayudar a las demás personas y compartir de lo que soy yo como Dios que soy, por un día. Esto es todo lo que puedo decir.

From The Beat: *¿Cómo ayudarías a las demás personas? ¿Y qué cosas compartirías si fuera como Dios?*

If I Were God

If I were God for one day, the only thing I would do is help out other people and share with others like the God that I am, for one day. That's all I have to say on this topic.

-Tommy, B4 SF/YGC

From The Beat: *How would you help out others? And what things would you share if you were like God?*

Killing! Why Did You Do It?

Why would Donald Beardslee do something like that? It's just something you don't do. That's just crossing the line!

But to do something like that, it takes a lot of courage to do that — and how did you feel? Did you feel like you had to? Or you just felt like it? Because I would want to know. Man, how do it feel, taking somebody away from their family and kids? It just don't make any kind of sense! That's just not something anybody would do! What made you do what you did? Don't you feel bad for what you did?

That's just sad, man, what you did; you just took somebody ahead of schedule. Killing! Man, there's no way in life someone would do something for nothing; so what I want to know is: Why did you do it? And how did it make you feel? What did you feel like after you did it? Did you regret it? Or was you happy for what you did? That's what I want to know.

And before you get killed man, you should regret what you did. But it's too late for all that now.

-Tiueti, 150 Crew

From The Beat: *It's too late to bring the victims back to life, but it's never too late to feel regret and remorse. Some believe that if you confess your sin to God with a heart sincerely full of remorse, you will be forgiven in the next world. Perhaps you will even experience that forgiveness in this world, if you repent. But repentance includes making amends, however inadequate — doing what you can, in whatever way, to at least begin to make up for what you did. All that aside, why are you, Tiueti, so fascinated with what it feels like to kill or have killed? Whatever a murderer feels, he must be out of his mind, don't you think, on some level — whether he feels good or bad! Not talking legal defense, but on the real, his mind is not healthy, no matter what he thinks or feels at the time.*

Cuando Me Mira La Gente

Mis amigos y las demás personas me miran como una persona muy buena y muy obediente, pero algunas personas no me miran así. Otros me miran diferente. El motivo que esas personas me miran mal es porque no nos quieren a nosotros porque nos miran distinto.

Lo único que puedo hacer con esta gente es de tratarlos bien para que miren que yo no soy esa persona que ellos miran. Para tomarlos como amigos, tienes que tener confianza en ellos y conversar de la vida de uno con ellos para que vean que uno no es esa persona que piensan.

From The Beat: *Nos parece buen metodo en comunicarse formalmente para que la gente conozca que uno si es bueno. En cambio, hay otras personas quienes creen que la única manera de ganar respeto es usando la violencia. También hay otros metodos mejores que haran saber que nosotros los Latinos servimos en algo, la cual es estudiando, trabajando y progresando en cosas positivas. ¿Nos copiastes?*

When People Look At Me

My friends and other people view me as a very good and disciplined person, but some people don't look at me this way. Others look at me differently. The reason why people look at me the wrong way is because they don't like us, because they look at us as being different than them.

The only thing I can do with this group of people is treat them kindly so they can see that I am not the person that they think I am. In order to consider them friends, you have to be able to trust them and be able to have a conversation with them about things that go on in your life so they can see for themselves that you're not the kind of person that they think you are.

-Tommy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: *This is a good way to communicate with another person formally so that that person will learn that you are a good person. On the other hand, there are other kinds of people who believe that the only way one gains respect is through the use of violence. There are other methods one can use to show others that we, Latin people, are a hard-working race, like being a person who studies, goes to school, and who intend to progress in positive things.*

Build Belief and Trust in the Future

I would start my own business and make something out of people! Make them believe and trust in their own futures. That's what I'd do to start off with, to help people.

And not just by helping, 'cause you always got to stay focused on yourself, too, but the more you help out — the more blessing fall upon you! And just start building stuff to keep people's minds off of drugs and that other stuff. You just got to build something for us to keep our minds, and our kids' minds also, focused on that. And the more we do that, the better our streets will be — and that will keep kids off of the streets and away out of that gang violence.

That's the way. We just need to start putting our minds and our kids' minds in focus. That's what I think. And that's what I'd do if I were President or governor of something. We just need to keep kids off of the streets — and also teach our kids to do the right thing, and trust they will listen. And also tell them about drugs and what it does to your body. That's the end of my story.

-Tiueti, 150 Crew

From The Beat: *It's fine to teach about the destructiveness of drug addiction (which includes alcohol), but your contention that we also need to build something (actively positive) to capture the imagination of today's inner-city youth and their children as well — is very well-taken. Merely swinging the club of negative consequences, seems to get no further than, "I don't give a what!" So, hooray that as a figure of authority, you build something that they would care about and focus on!*

Sobre La Muerte

Nunca he sentido como si me fuera a morir alguna antes, aunque sé que tengo que morirme de alguna forma. Si muero que sea la voluntad de Dios.

Un día soñé que mi mejor amigo había tenido un accidente en un camión y que había caído a un abismo muy profundo y que había muerto al instante. En ese sueño, me di cuenta que no importa lo que séamos o tengamos es esta vida, y que cuando morimos, nada nos llevamos, y que nadie puede esconderse, ni escaparse, de la muerte.

From The Beat: Que palabras más sabias nos acabas de escribir. Tienes muchísima razón, seamos lo que seamos, tengamos lo que tengamos, cuando morimos lo único que se va es el espíritu que le pertenece a Dios y el alma, la cual irá arriba o abajo. ¿Sabes lo que queremos decir con esto? ¿Dinos cambió tu forma de pensar sobre la muerte después del sueño?

My Thoughts On Death

I've never felt like I was going to die before, even though I know I need to die one way or the other. If I die, may it be by the grace of God.

One day, I dreamt that my best friend had gotten into an accident in a truck and he fell into a very deep abyss and had died instantly. In that dream, I realized that it doesn't matter what we are or what we have in life, because when we die, we can't take any of our earthly possessions with us to the afterlife, and also, nobody can hide, or escape, from death.

-Marlón B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Oh, what wise words you have just shared with us! You're right; no matter what we are or how many things or how much money we have, when we die, the only thing that leaves this Earth is our soul, which belongs to God, and our spirit, which will either go up or down. Do you know what we're trying to say? Tell us: Did the way you think about death change after your dream?

Casa Mejor

Bueno, para vivir en paz y en armonía en el hoga no se necesitas que la casa sea lujosa ni que esté pintada. La casa no tiene que cambiar. La solución no es tan facil, pero haciendo entendimiento y razonamiento quienes tendrían que cambiar somos nosotros los que habitamos en ella. Esa es la solucion porque cambiando nosotros cambia tambien el hogar.

From The Beat: ¿De que tipos de cambios estas hablando? Pero estamos deacuerdo con lo dicho, porque ni la casa, ni los cuartos, los muebles, la belleza de la casa es lo que hace un hogar, es la familia y los amigos y las mascotas lo que hacen un hogar.

Better Home

Well, in order to live in peace and in harmony at home, one doesn't need their home to be luxurious, or even be painted. The exterior of the house does not need to change. The solution is not that easy, but coming up with an understanding and rationale of who or what needs to change is easy, and that's us, the people who inhabit the home. That is the solution because once we ourselves change who we are, the home will change as a result of our change.

-Marlón B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What kind of changes are you talking about? However, we do agree with the points you've made because neither the appearance of the home on the outside, nor the rooms, the furniture, nor the beauty of the home is what makes the home, it's the family, the friends, and the pets that make up the home.

Lo Que Piensan Sobre Mí

Bueno, siempre me han visto como a los demás, pero de todos en la vida, siempre hay uno que lo mira mal. Aquí donde estoy, piensan que soy un chavo bien portado y que apesar de que hablo poco Inglés, sé como portarme. Mi abogado y mi oficial de probación dicen que sé expresarme bien y que soy una persona amable y alegre.

Si yo fuera Dios cambiaría a las personas para que nos miráramos todos iguales y que nos miraran deacuerdo a nuestras acciones y virtudes.

From The Beat: ¿Y cual es la verdadera identidad tuya? ¿Eres un chico bien portado o mal portado? ¿Te sabes expresar bien o no? ¿Cuales són tus virtudes? Sabias que las personas que saben expresarse bien son las personas muy importante y pueden dominar a las demás personas que no tienen esa habilidad. Por ejemplo, los diputados, los gobernantes, los presidentes, ellos ganan cuando saben expresarse, porque pueden convenser a las personas.

What People Think About Me

Well, people have always looked at me the same way they view others, but no matter what, there's always going to be someone who looks at you as being a bad person. Here, where I am, they think I am a well-behaved young man, and even though I don't know how to speak much English, I know how to behave. My lawyer and my probation officer say I know how to express myself very well, and that I am a amiable and happy person.

If I were God, I would change the way people think so we would all view each other as equals, and that people would judge us by our actions and our virtues.

-Marlón B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: And what is your true identity? Are you a well-behaved young man or do you misbehave? Do you or don't you know how to express yourself? What are your virtues? Did you know that the people that know how to express themselves well are the most important people around and they can progress faster in life than those who do not have that ability? For example: The representatives, the governors, the presidents, they get elected if they know how to express themselves because they can converse with people.

Por Cual Razon Vives Tu Vida

No vivo mi vida por el dinero, ni por mi barrio. Yo vivo mi vida por mi familia y por un nuevo día. Esa es la razón por la cual vivo mi vida.

Nunca me alegra escuchar o hacer cosas malas. Al contrario, siempre hago lo positivo para sentirme bien conmigo mismo y hacer una de mí una persona honesta para el bien de los demás.

From The Beat: Así se habla, así es como todos deberíamos de pensar. En vivir la vida para sentirse uno bien y para el bien de los demás, sin lastimar al prójimo.

What Makes Life Worth Living?

I don't live my life because of money or because of my 'hood. I live my life for my family and for a new day. That is the reason why I live my life.

Hearing bad things or doing bad things never makes me happy. On the contrary, I always do what's positive so I can feel good about myself and make an honest person out of myself for the good of others.

-Marlón, B2 SF/YGC

From The Beat: Atta boy! That's what we like to hear. That's how we all should think: Live life and be happy with how you're living it so you can feel good, and for the good of others, without causing any harm to the next person.

Too Bad

Too bad
 You never wanted to know me
 Too bad
 You never bothered to care
 Too bad
 I wanted your friendship
 Too bad
 You didn't want mine
 Too bad
 You call me sensitive
 Too bad
 You call me ugly
 Too bad
 You say I look like a fish
 Too bad
 That's too bad
 Cause I would have been a friend to the end
 Too bad
 Too bad
 That's too dang bad.

-Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's too bad for that person. Good for you.

Missing You

I miss you
 You were my best friend
 I thought we'd be together
 Until the very end
 You choose one path
 I choose another
 You wound up dead
 I wound up in jail
 And someday I believe
 We'll both meet up in hell
 But for now I'm stuck in this cell
 Feels like I'll never get out of jail
 And your feelings
 You're not here to tell
 Sometimes I want to yell
 Why'd you have to bail?
 God why'd you take his life
 Just to fill mine with strife
 But my pain won't suffice,
 To even make God be nice
 For anything good I must fight
 And even then it won't be right
 Sometimes I want to take a knife
 And plunge it through my heart
 So I can hear, taste, smell
 And see nothing but dark
 And me and my friend
 Won't be apart

-Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You will be reunited with your friend one day - and although it rhymed, we don't believe that it will be in hell. Sometimes life gets hard and we feel like giving up. But you know better. We know that you know better. You went one down one path and your friend went down another - you have the opportunity to live a better life. Use it.

A Cure For Lupus

If I can find a cure for something, it would be Lupus. My mother has Lupus and is sick all the time. Sometimes she's sick so long that her jobs fire her. And that's bad since she has five kids to take care of by herself. I love my mom, but when her white blood cells go down I start to worry.

She gonna die. I don't want her to die. Thinking about it brings me to tears. I love my mom. And she is still here for me, even though I am in jail. I wish I could help her.

-Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Losing someone to a disease is a hard battle to fight. Our only power lies in how we treat that person while they are with us. Treat everyday with the importance it deserves.

Conversation With Beardslee

How did you get here?

Was it worth it?

I mean what else is there to say?

They about to die! I mean it does seem kind of stupid. But I think I would start to cry and hug him. And I would try to stay through tears that it's going to be okay. At least you can go to heaven if you confess to God.

-Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are a good person. In our topic we asked if you would ask anything. But you seem to be focused on what you can do to console this person. But like you said - what can be said? A hug - that's it.

Why O Lord Have You Forsaken Me

Have you forgotten or mistaken me?

I've tried so hard to live my life by your word.

But I have stumbled and fallen, is that not unheard?

I try to fly straight

But as a human, I make mistakes

You may think I'm strong

But Lord I'm weak

I'm getting beat by life so bad

I can't speak

And it's hard to think

With so much temptation surroundin' me

And if I refuse

Here come some people clownin' me

I'm not supposed to cry

But what they say hurt

Feel like I been stomped down

And kicked around in the dirt

Lord my heart is hurt

So is my spirit

I need you right now

I need your love around

As corny as it sounds

I love you Lord

And I want to be heaven bound

-Brandi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Brandi, your honesty is so beautiful. We don't believe that the Lord forsaken you. Life has a way of teaching us things. Our pain and feelings of loneliness has a way of showing us things. Life hurts sometimes - but when we maintain and use our strength, things tend to work out for the best. You're much stronger than you think. We know it. We can see it in your words. Stay strong and keep writing!

She gonna die. I don't want her to die. Thinking about it brings me to tears. I love my mom

what do they want from me

All I Can Give

what do they want from me
 what do they want from me
 every time i catch up
 they take it that much farther to be
 what do they want from me
 they always make it that much harder
 they got me feeling like why bother
 but i can't give them the satisfaction
 to let them know they win
 because with me i can't lose
 no matter how hard the test
 i got to prove i am the best
 so what do they want
 why do they laugh in my face and taunt
 are they trying to break me down
 but they can't because for glory i am bound
 you can't change one's destiny
 and my visions have told me
 that the roads in front of me lead to gold
 not of money but of wisdom to be told
 what do they want from me
 i find gifts and share them with the world to see
 but all they do is tell me that's not good enough
 and i tell them of the obstacles i live through
 and they laugh and say you ain't tough
 what do they want what do they expect
 why can't they accept
 that i am not some kind of prodigal
 i am just a man to be
 i am not the messiah i am not an angel
 i am just a man that got entangled
 with life and got caught in the crossfire
 i was a child raised by half a family and a liar
 so what do you want from me
 what do you expect from me
 do you want me to quit
 do you want me to sit
 and watch as the world goes by
 because if you do that is not i
 i will find a way to make things happen
 even if it involves sin
 what do you want from me
 because all i can give is me
 there is nothing else for me to say
 at least not for today

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When they taunt and bait, those who would be the makers of your fate, and throw obstacles in your way, 'cause they want to make you pay for past mistakes as well as those they're sure you're just about to make — the hardest thing to do is just keep the focus on you, not the twisted picture you see reflected through their eyes but the real you deep inside your soul struggling to break free from history to be whole and strong and ready to move on far beyond their field of play. But the problem with reverting to sin for your pay — just when you're ready to go free, they get another opportunity to lock you in and throw away the key. There's no shame in being poor for a day or for a season, the only shame is giving them another reason to take away your freedom! So focus on do-right no matter what, or you'll stay stuck in this rut on the road to success. Humble yourself, do with less — and in the end with wisdom, happiness, and money, too, you'll be

Guardian Angel

i must have an angel somewhere in heaven
 because this cat has died past eleven
 i am only supposed to have one
 if that were true i would be done
 i done jumped off the edge without a care
 but i had an angel somewhere up there
 there's only one i can think of
 a woman with a heart as pure as love
 i can sense her when i am in full free fall
 she comes and helps me to my feet to stand tall
 then again my heart will fill with pride
 that's the way i feel with her by my side
 she is my strength and power
 she was and is beautiful and delicate like a flower
 i can feel grandma's hand upon my back
 keeping me on the right track
 but i swerve and stop
 yet slowly i'm on my way to the top
 and with her in the sky and inside
 me — she will never die
 she's brought me along the way
 but i must walk on my own today
 i should have died eleven
 for being alive
 i thank my grandma in heaven

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For sure there's love that lives past the grave, it stays in the hearts of those that are saved not once, twice or even a dozen, but infinite times we are saved by heaven's loving. Now the addict in us will take this as license to surrender to temptation each time it entices. But your grandma's love wants to see you be fully free, no longer a slave of ill-conceived impulsivity, not to mention your planned falls from grace. Yes, thank your grandma in heaven — and stop testing love's ways: Keep tossing dice and you'll crap out one day!

So God Watch Over You

this chain i give you
 it's so god knows
 his angel's here on earth
 and to watch over you
 because there's people
 who care
 and if anything happened
 they couldn't bear
 to lose their angel
 this cross
 is to tell you
 i wish i was there
 and to show how much i
 care
 i give you this
 just to show you're in my
 heart
 and for you i got
 a special part set apart
 to show that whatever i got
 is ours
 now i could keep going for

hours
 but i think you know
 the way i feel
 but what i want
 is to hear your voice
 i want to have you
 you're my choice
 this chain isn't a promise
 of wealth or good times
 it's promise that i'll
 be there all the time
 it's a symbol of my
 affection
 so god knows
 you need protection
 this chain is so
 god looks over you
 this chain i give you

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The cross is a symbol of love unto death, love that beyond the grave still takes breath. And the chain that adorns her beautiful neck, suspending the cross there upon her breast, is there to love and protect — a gift from a slave who will never neglect to support her endless pursuit of true happiness.

they got me feeling like why bother
 but i can't give them the satisfaction

Just Say Yes

just say yes
when i ask
to let me love you
just say yes
when i ask
to take care of you
just say yes
if i ask
to hold you tight
just say yes
if i ask to be with you
under the moonlight
just say yes
when i ask
for love and affection
just say yes
if i can be your protection
just say yes
when i hand you my heart
just say yes
when i finally ask
if our love could start
just say yes
when i ask for your caress
just say yes
when i ask to rest
my head upon your breast
just say yes
if i ask you to be mine
just say yes
and give me a sign
just say yes
when i need you with me
just say yes
if your lover i can be
just say yes
when i ask
if we will be together
just say yes
and we will be together
no matter the weather
just say yes
when i ask
to kiss your lips
just say yes
when i ask
to hold your hips
just say yes
when i ask
if you love me
just say yes
if to your heart
i hold the key
just say yes
when i ask
to take care of you
just say yes
when i ask
if i can love you

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The courting game has no rules, and even true love can look like a fool. But true love is a fountain overflowing its banks — and a lover's no banker, no way, no thanks. So open your heart and let your feelings be known; the more love you give, the more love that's grown. And the longer you live, the more love you're shown — if you're truly a lover, not a savings and loan.

Find Another

looks like i'm gonna
have to find another
looks like the one i want
doesn't wanna be a lover
she just wants to be a friend
i guess my heart was blind
i forgot she's a friend
but love knows no bounds
all it knows is how it wants
to hear those sounds
the words i love you
and sighs of pleasure
that feeling of having her with
me
has no measure
i just wanted to treat her
like a queen
to show her love
she's never seen
but not today
not this day
but maybe somehow
some way
i could find her heart
but for now
i just gotta play it smart

just gotta be a friend
and no matter what
i'll be there till the end
but at least i spoke
of my love for her
a love so sweet and pure
we just gonna keep it the
same
until she has feelings like i
claim
but for now my feelings i
must tame
for our relationship to remain
so for now i'll leave the flame
because the one i dream of
doesn't need a lover
so i guess i'll have to find
another

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard to see friendship must come first, when your hungry heart is burning with thirst and your soul is ready to burst the limits of reason — you've been locked up for too many seasons! The touch of her hand gave you false hope, or maybe it's her fear that's false; you never know. But for now, you're right — take it slow. And when you find another one to quicken the flame, look back to see if she suddenly calls out your name.

**just say yes
if i ask you to be mine
just say yes
and give me a sign
just say yes**

I Just Want You

i just want you
to love and care for you
i just want you
to hug and kiss you
i just want you
to give my heart's soul to you
i just want you
to spend my time with you
i just want you
because of what i see in you
i just want you
so i can protect you
i just want you
because the way i feel for you
i just want you
because i know i'll be true to you
i just want you
to hug and kiss and love you
don't you understand
— i just want you

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yet to protect her, you must protect yourself first — protect yourself from you and the foolish things from time to time you choose to do. Protect her from your old bad habits or the consequences will be savage. Time to live responsibly, choose well, stay free — for in love: what will be, will be.

Use' to Be My Girl

so many times i wanted to be with you
 but you made me feel down
 now you making me feel your da girl i wanna lose
 good times through da bad times we been through
 you broke my heart and tore up my soul
 i will always love you until my heart turns old and cold
 don't wanna look at your face
 wanna get back with me but it's too late
 use' to be my soul mate
 look now there's no one to relate
 use' to be my girl
 but i guess i'm just lost in this world

-Kuna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When pain takes the reigns from love's part, and all hope grows dark, even cruelty can wear a sentimental face. When pain takes love's place, it's a twisted knot that once was a heart, impossible to recognize what was there at the start.

War's Decisions

heavenly father
 so desperately i need help
 but i fear for my life
 if i put my gun on the shelf
 so what do i do
 i need to hear a reply
 i don't understand your ways
 and i don't know why
 i know it's for the good
 and would be better in the long run
 but what if things change now
 and later i'm the wrong one
 i might get killed or sentenced
 to twenty-five with an L
 or i follow your ways
 and hope not to fail
 but then i would disrespect you more
 than i have ever done before
 therefore i am asking you father
 for help to make the right decisions in war

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The more savage war is in your heart, where fear runs rampant and off the chart. So you grab your gun and head off to war, and ain't no maybes where you're headed for. It's true bloody boots muddy still waters, as you head off for mutual slaughter — but you prefer that to the fight within. And the irony is, it's a war you could win; if you would get past your fear and stop hiding in sin. Okay, let's put it like this:

Contemplating Suicide

Bawds leaving their professions,
 Turning over to an everyday-woman's life,
 Craving the promised blessings,
 Leaving all the confessions to release strife.
 Advantage being taken by others over her body,
 Stressed from forced or voluntary sexual intercourse.
 Always wanting to escape but never got it.
 Tears covering her blouse after sex with George.
 Contemplating suicide daily,
 Not wanting to go on, knowing her past
 Was sabotaged as a young lady
 When her mind-set was anything but vast.

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beginning with an antique word like "bawds" seems to indicate this poem to be again an improvisation in an antique style. Yet, were the poem not initiated with such a word, the rest of the poem stands independent of any such reference to the flowering of Elizabethan verse. It is real, articulate and powerful (though the closing line loses some power in stretching to make the rhyme, for the inverted statement sounds too precious for such a serious theme; almost like an Alexander Pope eighteenth-century socially satirical poem — though he rhymes in "heroic couplets", i.e., pairs of rhyming lines.)

Time To Let Go

i'm trying to take a time out for me and you
 it's time to let each other go
 my heart was open but it's time to close
 you said it before
 let's let go of each other
 we could be friends instead of lovers
 time to move on
 one last dedicated song
 before i let you go
 so much stressin' going on in my head
 can you understand our love is dead
 this is too much
 ain't no need to fuss
 i need to let you go 'cause i must
 i know you're stressin' and crying at home
 feel my pain the way i feel alone
 this will be the last time you will hear from me
 and my last poem

-Kuna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The heartbreak is clear, and so you call for an end of tears. Or if that cannot be accomplished, at least an end to the drama. When love becomes an exercise in futility, the heart stinks of death and corruptibility. And yet the beauty of this poetic offering, closes with a final note dropping delicate as a hammer: "This is my last poem," the poet stammers.

Ex-Girlfriend

baby girl you cut me off
 and now you want
 to talk again
 i mean i don't have
 much to say
 but i already got a friend
 and honestly i think
 this is really
 the only one for me
 plus she never
 done me wrong
 and never told me one story
 no excuses or lies
 like the ones you
 used to tell
 and i get a letter each week
 more than you wrote
 me in jail

now don't get me wrong girl
 i wish and pray for your
 future to be grand
 for i still love you
 but i can no longer hold
 your hand
 when times get hard
 pray to the lord and look to
 the word
 because when you left me
 hurt and all alone
 i prayed and i was heard

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tie this poem off in the end, with a thunderclap that can be heard in heaven's far-off land, where love is required, all lovers united, hunger is fed, and all pain comforted. You've moved on! And you say it clear and strong.

Its Meaning Shines Bright

fiddling with sneaks' and crooks' abilities
 leaving what was — as is
 confiscating nothing but freedom and liberty
 wanting no more than a little bliss
 adultery running and hiding away from light
 dodging every chance it has to strike
 cheating will never be able to hide
 its meaning shines way too bright
 whether lying or kneeling it's all the same
 taking what's not yours but craved
 trying to leave the same way you came
 won't work 'cause you're busted in a guilt maze

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Increasingly in this sequence of "Shakespearean" poems that we've been transferring from script to the printed page, you have dispensed with first word capitalization as well as grammatical punctuation in your handwritten versions. For consistency, at first we maintained both; then, only first word capitalization — but your poetic voice is here totally liberated from cobwebs of antiquarianism! So we follow suit formally, to reveal your own strikingly contemporary meditative poetry.

Mi Casa Limpia Es Bonita

El motivo que me gusta que mi casa esté limpia es porque se ve bonita. Me gusta que los cuartos esten limpio y las camas esten tendida y bien limpios.

Cuando me levanto, me gusta tender mi cama, limpiar mi casa, y mantener la sala limpia, y que todo este en orden y en su lugar, mantener los baños limpios, y tambien la cocina y los platos. Esto es todo.

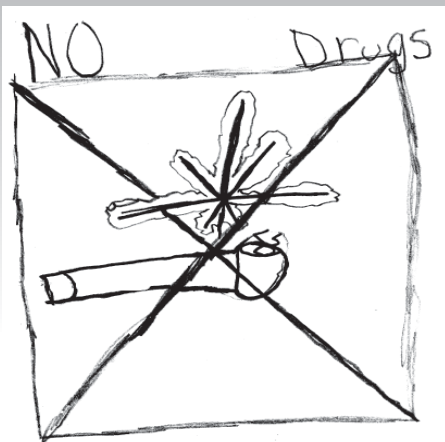
From The Beat: *Está fabuloso que seas bien haciado. ¿Sabías que las personas que mantienen una buena higiene son las personas que viven un poco más que los demás? A todo el mundo le gusta tener su hogar limpio, y sabes otra cosa a las chavas les encanta a los hombre bien limpios.*

My Clean House Is Beautiful

The reason why I like to have my house looking clean is because it looks nice when it is clean. I like my rooms to be clean and also for the beds to be clean and made.

When I wake up, I like to make my bed, clean my house, and keep the living room clean, and make sure everything is in order, keep the bathrooms clean, and also the kitchen and the plates. That's all I have to say for right now.

From The Beat: *It's fabulous that you like things to be in order. Did you know that people that practice good hygiene are the people who live a little longer than those who don't? Everyone likes to have a clean home. You know what? Girls love guys who are very clean.*



Le Dijera

Yo le dijera que se arrepintiera de sus pecados que cometió para que muera con su corazón en paz y para que Dios lo perdone.

From The Beat: *Es sólo una línea y media tu escritura, pero es lo suficiente para hacer sentir a alguien un poquito mejor.*

I'd Tell Him

I would tell him to be sorry for the sins he committed so he can die with his heart at peace so God can forgive him.

-Wilmer, Marin

From The Beat: *Your piece is only a line and a half, but it's enough to make someone feel a little better.*

**¿Si ustedes
fueran Dios, le
quitaría la vida
de tu hermano o
hermano?**

He Fallado

"De tando que he hecho, nada he hecho." Esto es lo que yo pienso de todo cuando estoy adentro. Nada mas me hago sufrir demasiado porque he fallado. Apesar de todo esto, me siento mal y cuando me siento mal, me siento muy aguitado por no ser un soldado. Ustedes saben que soy Hondureño, que tengo un corazón.

From The Beat: *Así es la vida, uno aprende de las experiencia que uno pasa. Esperamos que sigas dandote cuenta que ese camino que has llebado no te ha dado nada productivo. ¿Has pensado en cambiar? ¿Que tipo de soldados nos estas hablando que quieres ser? Ten cuidado con lo que desea y como lo deseas.*

I've Failed

"Despite all the things I have done, I have done nothing at all." That's how I think about everything when I am in here. I just make myself suffer way too much because I have failed. Because of all this, I feel bad and when I feel bad, I feel very depressed for not being a soldier. You all know I'm Honduran with all my heart.

-Kevin, Marin

From The Beat: *That's life. One learns from the experiences one goes through. We hope that you continue realizing that the road you've been following has not given you anything productive. Have you thought about changing? What kind of soldier were you talking about trying to be like? Be careful with what you wish for and how you wish for it.*

Lo Que Trae El Barrio

La neta es que morir por tu barrio no es nada. Nunca te trae felicidad a tu hogar y nomás trae puras broncas. Tú puedes dejar tu barrio para que no puedas pasar toda la vida en la cárcel.

Yo tengo muchas problemas con las demás gente porque nunca les tengo respeto. Para los que digan cosas de mi barrio, yo sigo muriendo por mi barrio. Esto es todo lo que tengo que decir.

From The Beat: *¿Cómo es que nos estas diciendo que el barrio no trae nada bueno y despues nos dice que estas dispuesto a morir por tu barrio? ¿De verdad dejaria este mundo, dejaria a tu novia, a tus padres, tios, primos con quien te criastes, el aire, las playas, los recuerdos bonitos de la juventud sólo por un barrio? ¿Estas hablando en serio? Deberias de pensar en lo que realmente quieres hacer con tu vida.*

What The 'Hood Has To Offer

The truth is, to die for your 'hood is not a worthy cause. It never brings any happiness to your home and the 'hood only has nothing but trouble to offer. You can leave your hood behind, and in doing so you won't be spending your life in jail.

I have a lot of problems with other people because I don't have any respect for others. For those who have things to say about my 'hood, I'm still going to continue dying for my 'hood. That's all that I have to say right now.

-José, Marin

From The Beat: *How can you tell us in your piece that the 'hood has nothing good to offer someone, but then you turn around and say that you're willing to die for your 'hood? Are you trying to say that you're willing to leave this world, leave your girlfriend, your parents, uncles, and cousins whom you grew up with; the air, the beaches, and the beautiful memories you have from your childhood — all over a 'hood? Are you serious? You should consider sitting down and looking in the mirror and figuring out what is it that you really want to do with your life.*

Esto Es Lo Que Les Dijera A El

Yo diría, "¿por qué lo matan si él es enfermo mental? Cual quier loco puede hacer este tipo de cosas, pero esta es una pregunta para ustedes. ¿Si ustedes fueran Dios, le quitaría la vida de tu hermana o hermano? Dice la biblia, "no quitar la vida de los demás." ¿Por qué no lo ayudaron para que no hicieran esto? Esta es mi opinión y gracias por escucharme.

La verdad es que no le preguntaría porque lo hizo, pero como les digo, ya está puesta la inyección y ya está muerto. Le diría de último, "que Dios te perdone."

From The Beat: *Tienes mucha razón, nadie tiene el derecho de quitarle la vida a otro ser-humano. Te acuerda lo que dice la biblia sobre aquella pecadora, la cual la iban a matar a piedradas los del pueblo porque se dieron cuenta que ella era prostituta, Dios dijo, "que tire la primera piedra aquel quien nunca haya cometido un pecado." Y en eso nadie tiro la piedra porque todos somos pecadores de alguna manera ó otra.*

This Is What I Would Say To Him

I would say, "Why are they killing you if you are mentally ill?" Any fool can do these kind of things, but this is a question for you all: If you guys were God, would you take away your sister or brother's life? The Bible says, "Don't take other people's life away." Why didn't they help him so he wouldn't have done something like this? This is my opinion and thank you for listening to me.

The truth is, I wouldn't ask him why he did it, but like I'm saying, the lethal injection was already administered to him, and he's already dead. The last thing I would say to him would be, "May God forgive you."

-Li'l Cobra, Marin

From The Beat: *You make a good point: Nobody has the right to take the life of another human being. Do you remember what the Bible says about a certain female sinner, the one who was going to be stoned to death by the townspeople because they found out that she was a prostitute? God said: "May the person who has never sinned in their life cast the first stone." And once he said this, nobody threw a stone because one way or another, we're all sinners.*

Te Amo Chiquita

Hola chiquita, como estas? Como siempre, que más te puedo decir. "te amo y en realidad has estado en mi mente en estos últimos días. En estos últimos días se me ha hecho muy difícil porque no dejo de pensar en ti. Mi chiquita, te extraño mucho. Extraño tu linda cara y más cuando te miro en mi foto todos los días, pero no es lo mismo que mirarte personalmente.

Amor, ya te quiero ver, tocar, abrazar, besar. Sin tan sólo supieras cuanto deseo estar contigo. En realidad mi amor yo soy capaz de hacer lo que sea para estar contigo. Así como te digo en casi todas mis cartas que te mando. Te amo un chingo. Te amo más que estas palabras, con estas letras a lo mejor no es suficiente con lo que estoy haciendo a ti, pero lo que cuenta es que te amo con todo mi corazón.

From The Beat: Cuando alguien ama a una persona, esa persona tiene que ser responsable en estar siempre pendiente de esa persona a todo momento y esto es justamente lo que no estas haciendo. Nosotros no entendemos porque ustedes siempre piensan en las novias cuando estan lejos de ellas, y cuando estan cercas de ellas, no las escuchan del todo. Esperamos que esta vez que te distes cuenta la falta que te hace ella, pues que hagas lo posible para poder estar a su lado hoy, mañana y siempre.

I Love You My Babe Girl

Hello my little one, how are you doing? Like always, what else can I tell you? I love you, and honestly, you've constantly been on mind these last couple of days. In those last couple of days, you've made them very hard for me because I just cannot stop thinking about you. My little one, I miss you a lot. I miss your beautiful face, and even more so when I see you in my photo everyday, but it's not the same like seeing you in person.

My love, I want to see you, touch you, hug you, and kiss you already. If you only knew how much I long to be with you. In reality, my love, I'm capable of doing whatever in order to be with you, but you already know this since I tell you this in almost every letter that I write to you. I love you a ton. I love you more than words can describe. I'm sure these letters are probably not enough to satisfy you or make up for what I'm doing to you, but what counts is that I love you with all my heart.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When someone loves another person, the person doing the loving has to responsible in always being aware of the other person's needs at all times — but unfortunately, you're not doing this. We don't understand why you guys are always thinking about your girlfriends when you guys are far away from them, but when you guys are with them, you guys don't pay any attention to them. We hope that now that you've realized how much she means to you and how much you miss her, when you get out, you do whatever it takes to make sure you're by her side today, tomorrow, and forever.



Maybe it's the
people in the
community,
your brother,
your sister, or
maybe even
your mother or
father.

Haciendo Tu Casa Mejor

Para mejorar su casa la solución no es tan facil. Tal vez no es la casa que tiene que mejorar sino las personas en esa casa. A lo mejor es la comunidad, tu hermano o hermana, o talbes tu madre o tu padre quienes tienen que cambiar.

From The Beat: A lo mejor eso es lo que se necesita en muchos hogares. ¿Y en tu casa que es lo que hace falta que se componga? ¿Tu familia o tú mismo?

Making Your Home A Better Place

The solution is not that easy. Maybe it is not the house that has to change, but the people in the house who have to change. Maybe it's the people in the community, your brother, your sister, or maybe even your mother or father.

-Veronica GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Maybe that's what needs to happen in many homes. As for your home, what is it, if anything, that needs to be fixed? Could it be your family or you yourself have to change?

Bebe

Sola y triste sin ti
Sin tu compañía
Mi corazón roto y adolorido sin tu amor
Extraño tu calor, tus brazos
Para que me abrasces toda la noche
No me dejes sin decirme "Adios"
No te vayas para siempre
Que me mataras de dolor
Necesito tus besos para darme ánimo
Mijo, los dos tras cuatro paderes
Solos y sufriendo por nuestra ausencia,
Pero no importa cuanto tiempo
Estaremos aparte, ni cuanta distancia
Porque cuando nos unamos otra vez
Nuestro amor va a ser fuerte
Más fuerte que un huracan enojados
So bebe, usted no se me aguite
Que su Guerita es para siempre
Te amo.

From The Beat: Es muy bonito tu poema. Se nota que eres un buen poeta, Guera. Sin embargo, tenemos que decirte que nosotros apreciamos tus colaboración en escribir al Beat, pero tenemos que decirte que cosas así como poemas dedicado a alguien, de amor en otras palabra, casi no los ponemos. La razón es porque nosotros queremos escuchar sobre sus sentimientos, sus expresiones o lo que tengan que decir. Y lo que tú hicistes, bien se la pudieses dar al muchacho de tu vida personalmente o enviada por cualquier otro medio. Nosotros recibimos muchas escritura que no ponemos por razon a que no hay mucho espacio en el Beat. Nos disculpa decirte esto, pero es nuestro derecho decirte para que la próxima vez puedas estar lista.

Babe

Alone and sad without you
Without your company
My heart is torn apart and in pain without your love
I miss your warmth and your arms
So you can hug me at night
Don't leave me without saying "Good-bye"
Don't go forever
Because you'll kill me from the pain you'll cause me
I need your kisses to give me courage
Boy, the two by four walls
Are alone and suffering because of our absence
But it doesn't matter
How long we're apart, nor how far apart
Because when we reunite once again
Our love is going to be strong
Stronger than an angry hurricane
So babe, don't get sad on me
Because your Guerita is yours forever
I love you.

-Guera, San Mateo

From The Beat: Your poem is very nice. Just from reading your piece, we can tell that you are a great poet, Guera. Regardless, we just have to say how much we appreciate you collaborating with us and writing for The Beat, but we have to let you know that things like this, like poems dedicated to someone, in other words, love poems, are almost never published in The Beat. The reason is we want to hear about your feelings, your thoughts, or whatever it is you want to get off your chest and onto paper. This poem that you wrote, you could have easily given it to that special someone in your life personally or given it to him by some other means. We receive a lot of pieces that we do not publish because space is at a premium in The Beat. Forgive us for having to tell you this, but it is our right to tell you this so the next time you sit down to write a piece, you'll know what's up and what you can, and can't, write.

con estas letras a lo
mejor no es suficiente
con lo que estoy
haciendo a ti, pero lo
que cuenta es que te
amo con todo
mi corazón.

Mi Camarada

¿Q-vole homies? ¿Como les va en Camp? ¿Qué les puedo decir? Quiero que se pongan truchas en la montaña y que hagan sus programa. No les den importancia a los que nomas hablan. Recuerden que el perro que no habla y muere.

Nomas hay un juego para mí: Es mi vida y mi gente, entonces no se olviden. Cuando me miren, ya se la saben. Respeto para mi gente.

From The Beat: Esperamos que te hagan caso a tus consejos. ¿Qué tal de ti? ¿Que has hecho? ¿Qué haras para mejor tu situación? Espero que tú también hagas tu tiempo y salgas de aquí y si mismo darle el ejemplo a los demás, estamos seguro que si te ven cambiado a ti, te harán más caso.

My Homegirl

What's up, homies? How are things going for you all in Camp? Let's see, what can I tell you all? I want you all to put your gurauds up, up there in the mountains, and to do your programs. Don't pay attention to those who only know how to run their mouths. Keep in mind the dog who does not bark but has a ferocious bite.

There's only one game for me: That's my life and my people, so don't forget about it. When you all look at me, you all already know what's up. Much respect for my people.

-Pelon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that your homies pay attention to your words of advice. How about you? What have you done? What are you going to do in order to better your situation? We hope that you also do your time and get out of where you find yourself, and in doing so, set the example for others. We're positive that if they see you change, they'll pay even more attention to you.

Yo No Soy Dios

Bueno, pues yo no soy Dios, y nisiquiera quiero serlo, pero si yo pudiera cambiar algo, cambiaria muchas cosas como la muerte de mis homies y otras cosas que he perdido en mi vida.

También cambiaria cosas de mi personalidad, sólo si yo fuera Dios pero como no lo soy así se van a quedar las cosas, y voy a seguir siendo un Mexicano original.

From The Beat: Las pérdidas de tus homies de seguro que no puedes hacer nada al respecto mas que dejarlos descansar en paz. Pero con respecto a tu personalidad, puedes cambiar mucho y hasta todo. Esto si tiene remedio, y la única herramienta para poder hacer este cambio es querer cambiar.

I'm Not God

Well, I'm not God, and I don't even want to be it, but if I could change something, I would change a lot of things, like the death of my homies, and other things that I've lost in my life.

Also, I would change things about my personality. I would only do this if I were God, but since I'm not, things are going to remain the way they are, and I'm going to continue being an original Mexican.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Unfortunately, you can't do anything about the death of your homies except let them rest in peace, but you, on the other hand, you can change your personality and a whole lot of other things. This does have a cure, and the only tool that you can use to make this change happen is you actually wanting to change for yourself.

Cada Mañana

Yo me levanto cada manana porque Dios me permite ver un día mejor y me da la motivacion para vivir y ver un día mejor. Aqui nomas estas encerrado y no puedes ver los días mejor o diferente porque todos los días son los mismos. Bueno, bueno, pues los días no son lo mismo, pero las cosas que hacemos todos los días son lo mismo.

From The Beat: Esperamos que mejores tu comportamiento para que puedas aprovechar de los días que Dios brinda a tu vida. ¿Has pensado en cambiar para disfrutar de lo que te espera afuera? Si no, pues deberias.

Every Morning

I wake up every morning because God allowed me to see a better day and gives me the motivation to live and see a better day. In here, all you do is spend your time being locked up and you can't see better days or different ones because everyday is the same. All right, all right, not everyday is the same, but the things we do everyday are the same.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope that you improve your behavior so you can take advantage of the days, months, and years God grants you to live. Have you thought about changing so you can enjoy what awaits you on the outs? If you haven't, then you should.

Mis Equipos Favoritos De Football

Hablando de Football. Mi equipo favorito son los Raiders de Oak. Yo soy de San Francisco off the top, pero represento a los Raiders y los Cowboys porque me gustan como juegan. Aunque ya esten afuera de la lista yo los sigo apoyando. También voy con los Steelers. Yo corro bien chido con esos equipos y es como les dije, soy de Frisco, pero no corro con los 49'ers porque no me gustan.

From The Beat: Bueno, no te culpamos de nada, cada quien tiene su manera de pensar y cada quien es libre de escoger su gusto. Esperamos que para la próxima vez, algunos de tus equipos le hechen ganas y que lleguen muy largo. Pero eso si, tienes que mantenerte afuera para que puedas asistir a los juegos. ¿Que no?

My Favorite Football Teams

Speaking of football, my favorite team is the Oakland Raiders. I'm from San Francisco off top, but I represent the Raiders and the Cowboys because I like the way they play. Even though they didn't play in the playoffs, I still continue to support them. I also go with the Steelers. I'll pick those teams any day, and, like I said, I'm from San Francisco, but I don't go with the 49ers because I don't like them.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, we're not blaming you for anything. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion and everyone is free to choose what they want in life. We hope next season your teams put forth a lot of effort and go far in the playoffs. However, you have to stay on the outs in order to attend the games, right?

Mi abogado y mi oficial de probación dicen que sé expresarme bien y que soy una persona amable y alegre

Yo Me He Enfrentado A La Muerte

Bueno, yo me he enfrentado a la muerte antes. Cuando tenía 15 años me pude morir, y desde ese momento empecé a apreciar la vida. Yo no me quería morir. Todo esto pasó cuando andaba haciendo un chingo de desmadres y desde que pasó esto, me calme un poco.

Ahora siempre hago desmadres pero más tranquilo y con mas cuidado para que no me pase lo que me pasó. No quiero enfrentar la muerte otra vez.

From The Beat: Está bien que hayas aprendido a disfrutar de la única cosas que tenemos en esta vida, lo más sagrado, nuestras vidas. Esperamos que ahora sepas como hacer las cosas como es debido porque en cambio volveras a lo peor y estamos seguro que eso es lo que no quieres en tus días de vida.

J've Come Face-To-Face With Death

Well, I've come face-to-face with death before. When I was 15 years old, I could have died, and from the moment on, I really started to appreciate life. I did not want to die. All this happened when I was running around acting like a hoodlum, and ever since that happened, I calmed down a bit.

Now, I always do dirt, but now I'm calmer and I'm more cautious so what happened to me does not happen to me again. I don't want to come face-to-face with death again.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's good that you've learned to enjoy one of the only things that we have in this life, which is also one of the most sacred things we have in life, and that's our life. We hope that you now know how to do things the right way, because if you don't, you'll go right back to what's worse and we're sure that's not what you want all the days of your life.



A Positive Place

I would open a beauty shop and a piercing/tattoo shop and a floral shop. My sister and in-laws will work for me. It would serve my community because it would be a very cheap and positive place. A lot of people would come 'cause it would be cheap.

-Teletubie

From The Beat: You can get your hair done, a new tattoo, your nose pierced and a beautiful bouquet of flowers all at the same place. Sounds good to us! How are you going to make it so cheap? How will you make any money? You've got an idea with potential. What's the master plan?

it would be
a very cheap
and positive
place

My Money Machine

if i could have a business
it would be selling cars
it would help a lot of ninjas
from my 'hood 'cause
i think that's where we need help

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: Having your own car for transportation, for sure, increases job opportunities — shifts you can take, job sites you can reach. Maybe sell cars to those who need them to take a job, in exchange for a regular part of their paychecks?

Business In/For The Community

I would run properties of my own, to sell to other people — so they could live in a nice home. Another business of mine in the community, will be a clothing store of my own brands and designs.

-John

From The Beat: How would your clothing line and store(s), benefit the community? By quality of craftsmanship? By whom you employ at a fair wage in manufacturing and sales?

The Purple Store

I would make a legal purple store. I would have the best purple in the world. My purple would be able to smell it to know it's purple. I would have 30, 40 or 50 sacks, no lower.

-Young Toi

From The Beat: You kind of lost us there, when you say purple store do you mean an all purple store? Is that the new thing? Who got the best color purple on their store walls. Can you further describe to us your purple store? Is that your favorite color?

Music Business

If I could start my own business, it would be a music business, because a lot of kids in our community like some type of music. Even adults like music. But most of all I have a love for making music. I would enjoy opening a music business.

-Justin

From The Beat: What would you do, start your own label? Would you make beats? Would you record your own music, or produce? Or both?

"CONVERSATION WITH THE ALMOST DEAD"

Poor Beardslee

I would ask the person why would they want to do what they did and how does it feel knowing that you're about to die? I would probably feel kind of bad for that person.

-Mike

From The Beat: Yeah —that's pretty much all that can be done. Do you think that there is anything that this person could have done that justifies death?

Beardslee's Last Conversation

If I had a chance to talk to the almost dead I would ask him what was the feeling of knowing you're going to be executed feels like. Also I would ask him if he could tell me his side of the story and why. I would also ask if he regrets doing what he did and what things does he think of most, or if he got a family or someone he thinks of the most.

I would also like to know what he thinks of everything, what he would do different if he could go back.

-Slick

From The Beat: These are all compassionate and thoughtful questions. Can you try and put yourself in his shoes and imagine what he might say?

Talk To Beardslee

If I were to have talked to Beardslee, I would have asked him: Why would he have done such a thing? Because you have to be pretty crazy!

I would tell him that it was his choice to kill them, and he messed up! And people that murder, shouldn't get another chance — because he took someone's life! A mother's daughter, a cousin, aunt.

I would ask him how his childhood was, because there must have been something wrong with him to do that! Maybe family problems, or problems with life itself. That's what I would tell him.

-Re

From The Beat: If we forgive the sinner not the sin, to kill the killer within — do we need to kill the man? Nothing will bring the dead back to life again. So we killed him. And now it's all right? Or maybe we all became killers one minute after midnight.

David Beardslee

i would have asked him why he killed those women and what they had done to him in order for him to commit such a crime and i'd ask him how do he feel now that he's gonna be killed just like he killed the women

-John

From The Beat: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life; was established to set a just limit to vengeance. Yet, Gandhi and MLK after him, said, "An eye for an eye, and we all go blind."

Conversation With The Man on The Row

I would ask him what it felt like to know that his death has an exact time. What's it like to know how it's going to happen and when, and there is no mystery to his death. Just want to know what he is going through and what he's going to do about unfinished business. RIP dead man walking.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Sooner or later we'll all have the chance to know what he's going through. Patience brings upon good things but patience will also bring upon our death, hopefully at a ripe old age.

Ain't Tryin'a Be Donald Beardslee

This is Drew. I'm locked up in Alameda County for a stupid reason. And I'm hearing about a man that is locked up in San Quentin, who is getting killed tonight for what he did.

It just reminds me not to even try things that he did. He is a felon, and I can't even think about what he did to two human beings.

Many people have opportunities to stay clean and stay out of jail. Some people live to have a messed up life, known to be either a gangsta or a criminal; and the way I live is in that kind of way — but I'm not much of a criminal.

What I do in life is focus on my career and try to get more knowledge. I stay real and encourage myself to do better. I'm out.

-Andrew

From The Beat: If you continue to live "that kind of way", you'll continue to jeopardize your career and your future in general. You'll continue to get caught up for "stupid" reasons, and each time will make it that much harder not to get discouraged in your positive pursuit of knowledge and a career. Stay up. Do right.

Donald Beardslee

I think Donald Beardslee deserved to be killed, because what he did was wrong. There was no reason for him not to die. Think about it — what if that would have been your family?

-Shrimp

From The Beat: The family of one victim felt he should be spared; the family of the other, that he should die.

Conversation With The Condemned

Damn 12:01 your life is over.

By the time this makes The Beat you will be dead.

I mean they say only God can chose you death but the state just put a expiration date on your life Well, rest in peace.

-Lil' Law

From The Beat: Well Mr. Beardslee was pronounced dead at 12:29am. The state of California served the ultimate punishment. Remember, if you live a life practicing death this could eventually become your reality sooner than later, but if you live a prosperous life, legitly, there's more of a chance you will live a long prosperous life.

Can't Do Nothin' Beardslee

I think I'd say: Are you dealing with the fact that you're going to die and can't do nothing? How do you deal with it and be able to handle the situation? What cause you to do this? I would tell him to pray and ask God for to forgive him for his sins.

-Justin

From The Beat: If you were in his shoes, what do you think would be the last thing on your mind? Would you be praying? Would you want someone with you, or would you want to be alone?



Words For Tookie, The Almost Dead

What It Is Tookie Williams? I know you are going through it. Just keep ya head up, ask God for your forgiveness, an' you will be all right. You will go to heaven. Forget the system, Man. they always trying to say negative stuff.

-T-Grimie YTEC

From The Beat: We're sure that Tookie would appreciate hearing these words. Besides giving him advice, though, would you like to learn anything from him? Would you like to ask him any questions? Like what?

Conversation With The Condemned

If I had a chance to talk to the almost dead, I would ask him questions like, "What was you thinking when you killed those two women, and why did you kill them man?"

I know that man is hurting right now because he knows it's his time to go meet God. I would also ask him, "What do you think about the government taking your life?" I would also tell him to keep his head up.

-Ivero B5

From The Beat: How would you answer your own last question, Ivan? How do you feel about your government taking life?

Talk With the Almost Dead

I think I would ask him why he killed them. What was the reason why he did it? Then I'd ask him and talk about God and Jesus. You know, if he's a Christian or not.

And yes, then I would ask, "Were you in your right mind, since you have brain damage?" And if he said no, then I would ask him, "Do you want me to help you ask God for forgiveness?" Then I would pray for him. Even though I'm a new working and helping Christian, I still would try and help.

-Lil' June B5

From The Beat: We admire you for understanding Jesus' message of forgiveness, and asking for it on behalf of the condemned prisoner. What if he were not a Christian, but believed in some other religion? Could he be forgiven if he were a Muslim or Jew?

Questions For The Near Dead

Conversations with the almost dead

Why did you do it?

How did you feel afterwards?

How do you feel now that you are going to die?

What are you leaving behind?

-Tasharie YTEC

From The Beat: Besides the questions, would you also have anything you'd like to tell him before he breathes his last? Do you have any feelings about whether the state should be in the business of taking lives? What are they?

...then I would ask, "Were you in your right mind, since you have brain damage?"

Talking To A Condemned Man

I would ask what made you do it, and what do you feel inside? Would you go back in time and change what you did?

-Chunky-los B1

From The Beat: This last question we could put to you: would you go back in time and change what you did? Of course, that's impossible, so we'll ask: will you look to the future and change the way you live, so that you can stay free?

A Painful Conversation

If I could talk to the almost dead I would try to make them feel comfortable because of the position that they are in. Just to show my appreciation because only God knows the pain that they are feeling.

-Young CD B5

From The Beat: This wonderfully empathetic response to the reality of someone about to be executed tells us that you have a good heart. That is a wonderful quality to have. Thank you for this.

I'd Feel Sorry

I would feel sorry for him because he/she had brain damage, but I really wouldn't care whether he got killed or killed over his/her cell. He should have never made that decision in the first place. So whatever the penalty is, it would be their own problem, their own fault.

-Alexis GU

From The Beat: Do you think that having brain damage may cause a person to make bad decisions? If that's the case, would you have any sympathy for this person?

Business

If I would have a business it would be a business making tattoos so I can use my art skills to make money. So it won't be a waste of time. The only reason I don't have tattoos is because I respect my body. On the other side I like to draw on other people's body. I ain't got much to say, so see ya if I see ya.

-Travieso B5

From The Beat: It's interesting, Travieso, that you respect your body too much to put marks on it. Did anyone ever pressure you to get a tattoo? What did you say? If you were to get a tattoo, what would it be?

ALAMEDA COUNTY

"UNTIL THERE'S A CURE"

A Cure For Death

I wish I had a cure for the deaths that occurred, because the death of these hood felons really hurt the community and we are all still grieving over the actions which took my lil and big brother's lives away from the people who love them for many reasons. So until there's a cure, those RIP will always and forever be remembered on my turf.

-Lennox

From The Beat: You speak with so much emotion and that's in a good way. It's so much wrong with this world at times it makes you wonder in which area do you first fix the problem. We need more soldiers like you on the front line striving to bring upon world peace in a world that keeps all of us blind to the days to come. It's bigger than the turf. What can you do on your turf to bring peace?

Violent Free World

I want a cure for violence in the world, because if there was my lil' bro Davon would be here and also J.J, Ant, Greedy, Creedy and Treket and no more real ninjas would be taken off the earth.

-Weezy

From The Beat: The cure is right here in all of our face. We just got to grab it and utilize it to our benefit. It starts with you, Weezy.

First Things First

To The Beat: All I really care about right now, is my court date, my family, and my release date.

But I do feel for people with diseases and mental illness, because someone in my life has schizophrenia. And he is a real big drinker, which only makes him hear a lot more things in his head!

-Detained

From The Beat: (1) You also need to care about how and what you do after your release, if you care about yourself, your family and your freedom! (2) Alcohol abuse and schizophrenia together, do not make a pretty picture. In treatment, they call it a "dual diagnosis" — meaning two diseases: addiction and schizophrenia.

Curing AIDS

If I could cure something it will be AIDS because a lot of people are dying of AIDS. If I could cure that disease I would. People are dying all over.

-Delonzo

From The Beat: This is a worthy choice. How do you think you can help educate yourself and your friends about what you can do to avoid contracting AIDS?

The Biggest Problem is Drugs

If I could find a cure for people with aids, cancer, muscular dystrophy I would. Because it's real messed up for people with this because most were born with some of these problems. The biggest problem with people in our community, has to do with DRUGS. I would most of all put a stop to drugs.

-Justin

From The Beat: Why drugs, are there personal instances you've seen, of people being destroyed by drugs? Does this mean that you also stay away from drugs?

A Cure For AIDS

I would like to have a cure for aids because a lot of people in Africa have it mostly Black people. If I had a cure I would not make my people pay for it I would go around the world and cure every person that has aids.

-Mali

From The Beat: You have a kind heart. To have the compassion to want to help anybody regardless of where they may find their residence in this world tells us that you must come from a breed we know as "ANGEL."

It Won't Change

Until there's a cure
My 'hood will not be pure
It will stay grimy
That's what I love about it
But that's also what I hate about it
It's hard to explain

But all I know is the 'hood will stay the same.

-Roiri, B2

From The Beat: Love/hate relationship, yes, we understand. When you say the 'hood never changes, what do you mean? We hear folks say that people used to handle things with their fists, but now they use guns, so that's a change. Do you mean the 'hood won't ever change for the better? If you could change a few things about the 'hood, what would they be and why?

It's Got To Be AIDS

If I had a cure for a disease, it would have to be AIDS because it's a horrible disease. I also knew one person who died from it and the way their whole life changed from when they found out up until their last day, they really suffered.

-Tasharie YTEC

From The Beat: Many people have named AIDS as the disease they'd like to cure because so many people suffer from it (and die from it), that it's hard not to know somebody in that situation. The one thing we know about AIDS is that it can be prevented with some simple precautions which we hope every young person is taking.

Curing Gangrene

I feel that I would like to cure gangrene. It is a disease that spreads through your body like cancer, and it is a disease that took my aunt's life. RIP Aunt Catie.

-Dre YTEC

From The Beat: We feel sorry about your aunt, Dre. Gangrene is a terrible condition to suffer from, much less to die from. This is one of those things that would not exist if people were not so poor, because it can be prevented if addressed early enough.

Curing HIV

If I could find a cure a disease it would be HIV because my aunt died from it. Also because a lot of people is dying from it.

-Mike YTEC

From The Beat: Yes, too many people are dying from it. There are countries in Africa where one in every four people is infected, and millions are expected to die from this plague. We hope your dream for a cure comes true.

Lots Of People Die From Cancer

If I could cure any disease, I would cure cancer. I would cure cancer because they're a lot of types of cancer. A lot of people die from cancer every year. If I could cure cancer the death toll would drop a lot. To me curing cancer is going to be a great accomplishment for the human race.

-Andy B2

From The Beat: Have you ever thought about going into a field where you could help find a cure? It sure sounds like you have an interest in it.

I Would Cure Cancer

I would cure cancer. No one deserves to bear that burden without putting it on themselves, it being put on them by some other force. Cancer is naturally unnecessary in my eyes. An innocent person could catch cancer, that's not cool. It makes me feel blessed to be healthy. I would also cure blindness.

-David B2

From The Beat: Interesting and sympathetic writing. What if someone did something to get cancer, like smoke cigarettes, would you still feel sorry for them?

When
you die,
they have
to put
bleach
on your
body.

Cure Death

I wish I could cure death and addicts just because I never wanted my moms to pass away. It would be a lot better if that was cured so we would stop losing loved ones, and that's real. For all my ninjas dead, rest in peace I just wish people were to stop dying.

-Baby Low YTEC

From The Beat: We can definitely feel the pain that moves you to want to cure death so you could bring your mama back. But can you imagine what the world would look like if no one ever died? There would be so many people fighting with each other for food and water and all our scarce resources that soon there would be a lot of other things you would need to cure! The death of our mothers is one of the hardest things we have to endure. The only thing that makes it easier is that every one of us — every human being on earth — will have, or has already had, this experience. And one other thing, as long as you live, Baby Low, your moms will live within you.

AIDS Cure

If I could find a cure for a disease, I would find a cure for AIDS because my uncle died of it.

-Cal B2

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your uncle.

Curing AIDS

The sickness I would cure is AIDS for the simple fact that we are losing so many of our adults, grandparents, youth and many more. My way of curing would be more than one way. My first way of curing AIDS would be to give everyone this juice-like drink. My second way would be to give everyone a pill to prevent it before it even starts.

-Alexis GU

From The Beat: Prevention is a good way of keeping AIDS from killing so many people. We, too, hope someone finds a cure.

AIDS

If I could find a cure for a disease, it would be AIDS 'cause hella people are dying from AIDS. And people gotta live with it, and can't do nothing about it.

-Malo B4

From The Beat: Actually, there are some things you can do if you have HIV or AIDS. There are drugs that keep the virus from developing fully, at least for a while. If you did find this cure for AIDS, would you distribute it freely, or would you be charging people for it? Is there any other disease you want to cure human beings of?

End Ebola

Ebola is a very bad disease that started in Liberia, Africa. When you get Ebola, you first start to sweat and get a fever. It's an air borne disease. When you die, they have to put bleach on your body. Almost everybody who gets it dies from Ebola.

-Dub B1

From The Beat: We have read about this terrible disease. What made you interested in it? Do you know anyone who had this disease?



So Many AIDS Deaths

I would cure AIDS because a lot of people in the world are dying because of that. And also, I would get rid of cancer because that's a number one killer in America, too.

-Chunky-Ios B1

From The Beat: Do you think if AIDS and cancer were cured, that new diseases would come to take their place?

AIDS

Well, the major disease that I would like to cure is AIDS, because so many people are dying from this disease every day and more people are getting it. Also it doesn't matter who you are and what treatment they give you, you're still going to die. They don't have any kind of treatment out yet that will fully cure you, so that's what I would like to study and take care of.

-Theresa GU

From The Beat: Good thinking, Theresa, and we're really happy to hear that you'd like to work to find a cure.

I'd Cure Cancer

If I could cure any disease, it would be cancer. The reason why I choose cancer is because my mom died from liver cancer. I don't want anybody else to die from cancer.

-Willy B2

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear this, Willy. What would you say to other folks who have lost loved

...it would have to be AIDS because it's a horrible disease.

Why Did I Run?

Why did I run from the group home? I ran from the group home 'cause I was sick and tired of others and staff making fun of me. My PO was playin' with me, trying to make me stay there for a year and a half. I didn't like that group home. I asked my PO could I leave and my PO said no.

I just got tired and my friend had gotten into a fight. He hit the other boy in the face and the other boy fell down and started crying. I started laughing — I was laughing 'cause it was funny. I never seen nobody get knocked out before. And then he pushed me and I had pushed him. We had gotten in a fight.

I was hella mad I had walked out the front door — I had robbed somebody for money so I could come to Oakland, and when I got to Oakland my friends were waiting for me with some weed and drank, and the next day I had and E pill riding around with this drunk dude and the police stopped us. He had recognized my face and told me to get out of the car. In my pocket he found a pill and a sack.

Now I'm here in the Hall. But I am going home on EM.

-Lil' Alex

From The Beat: The trick to the game the system plays is that you can only get out if you play by their rules. Yeah, the group home sucked and it's rough when people (especially staff) are making fun of you, but the best way to deal is to do the year and a half so when you walk out that door, you walk out a truly free young man. When you left, you jacked someone and then got drunk and high — not actions that show that you were sick of your group home, since they're the very same actions that can get you locked straight back up. And they did. But you got lucky, and you're going to get out on EM. Have you learned anything from your group home experience that you can apply to doing your program on EM?

Is It Real Love?

What's up Beat? This is Young Bezo, hitting you'll up from the hall once again.

See, I was in love with this girl once but when times get hard I ask myself is it real love that makes me do things that I do, or is it just because I like her?

But, if I just like her, I wouldn't do the things that I do like take her out to eat. Buy her shoes to put on her feet. I would use her just for the money and to do what I do, besides messing with the squad. But I don't need her money 'cause I got a case full of money.

But anyway, she seen me on some hot shhh and was begging me, please not to do what I do and that's when I knew it was real. But not so real 'cause when I was locked down for three months she didn't write me, so I stopped writing her, so now she stressing and now I'm locked up just doing my thang.

So man if yo' girl is doing you right, you should hold on to her, but now I got to go.

One love stay up and always keep your head up, I'm out.

-Young Bezo

From The Beat: That's right! It's hard to find a good woman out there that's why you have to hold on to the good woman that may happen to come into your life. Life is no game and you must take it as serious as it is, or you will be the one who'd get played in the end. Trust us, no girl or boy wants there partner locked up.

Stay Outside

To all the homies on the outside living a good life on the outside: Stay outside and don't get caught, 'cause once you in here you wish you never got caught. 'Cause right now I feel like I'm living in hell, I wish I didn't do what I did.

-Diep

From The Beat: This is good advice. How can you follow this advice yourself the next time around? Can you remember this stay in hell — oops, we mean the Hall — next time you're tempted to break the law?

Worth It While I Was Out There

What's up? My name 'E' — and I been in here for like five months. I'm in here for a fake case of carjacking with a pistol.

The shhh was worth it, while I was out there having fun, puttin' my potnas that was not doin' good into it and givin' them a half of some D (dope) and tellin' them they don't even have to bring me no money back! I was goin' to a different hotel with somebody's sister in my passenger seat every day — well, not every day, but it did seem like everyday though.

I was out there doin' hella shhh, and ninjas I used to get money with — wanted my head! That's why I never left the house without my pistol. RIP to these fallen soldiers: ANT, B-bo, Criddy-bo, Lil' J, JuJu, MAT, Jason.

-E

From The Beat: You must have been in some sort of manic state of insanity, and maybe you're still in it, at least in memory — to claim that's it's worth it when you have ex-moneymaking partners after your head, and you want us to believe it was all worth it at the time. Or, maybe you're saying that the funk came after it stopped being fun. One thing is for very sure, where it took you to, is no fun now — but at least you're still breathing.

Bring Them Up, Not Down

Today, I am going to do a "free write". So I think I'm going to write about my time in the Hall. So far it has been all right. I been trying to stay out of trouble and tryin' to be out of my room as much as I can.

One of the things that I go through, is — it's easy to do bad, but it's hard to do good. What I mean by that, is that you can be doin' good; but your patna is doin' bad — so it's going to be harder for you to do good 'cause he is going to try to get you to do what he is doing!

While I am up in here, I been tryin' to make it the best that I can do, to change when I get out! So for all y'all reading this — don't let your friends bring you down! Bring them up with you! If you start to do that, it might help you get out and do the right thing.

Just remember, if you do the right thing, the system sees that. I feel they can't hold you down forever — it might be a min' or not; but they can't hold you down!

-D

From The Beat: That "group think" or your friend wanting to go do something "bad" and wanting you to do it with him, really is a powerful influence over teen behavior, especially if you're high, whether off alcohol, pills, weed or whatever. And it does make it easy to do bad and harder to do good, at least in the moment. Later, serving hard time makes doing the right thing back when, by comparison, look easy! And yes, it would be great if you could bring your friends up with you — and frankly, that's easier to do in here than out there! But it's a real start, and could help you out there, too. You don't need to think of it as doing it "for the system" — but when you really are out there doing good, the system can't touch you. Then, the more you cut corners — the more you put yourself at risk! Some say that if you really want to out there doing right, you'll need to change your playgrounds, playmates and playthings!

Touched Down In Max

What's up Beat Within? This is Payaso, writing from max. I just touched down today, 1/18/05. I'm just waiting still to go to court.

Hopefully when I go, they let me out that day, or when I turn eighteen in May, or whatever. Well, Beat, I'm gonna end this till next week.

-Payaso

From The Beat: Think about what you can do to increase your chances of staying out this time when you get that release. 'Cause last time you were barely out long enough to change clothes. No diss, just how it is.

I Love Living Ghetto

I love living ghetto! One of the reasons I love living the ghetto lifestyle, is because you can learn how to appreciate the shhh that you weren't able to have 'cause you was a poor, low-class ghetto-type of ninja.

Another reason, is because in the ghetto I grew up in, my 'hood family shows me love — and there ain't nothin' I'd rather have than my ghetto family! Living ghetto, it's all about learning how to survive the messed-up circumstances you in. That's when you separate the real ninjas from the fake!

And in the ghetto there is no rules — you gotta do what you gotta do to stay alive and get something to eat. And that's why I love living ghetto! One love to my family. And to Lil' Jose and Lil' Juanito up at Camp, be safe buggers — and pimp that program.

-Baby Rube

From The Beat: Here you are in max, having caught extra charges, and you're celebrating the fact that the way you grew up you never learned how to follow rules! So "living ghetto" turns out to mean, living your adult life in and out of lockdown (or just in). There's not much to love about that. We feel your loving the wide-open feeling of growing up without rules, but look at where you are now and you should see — it's over. From here on, it's learn or get burned by the system till you're ready to listen!

Friends

Friends, they can be good, they can be bad. What I mean by that is you can have friends that are there for you and ones that are not. But the ones that are there for you, you got to ask yourself — will they always be there for you? Or will they turn thei' back on you?

Nowadays, people really don't have friends anymore, 'cause they always going behind your back and downing something. Some people say that thei' friend will never do that. Some will and some won't! So what I'm trying to say is — watch who you pick as your friends, 'cause you never know.

Me, myself, now my friends are my family members, 'cause I feel you can always count on your family to be there for you. Thanks for takin' the time out to read this and hear what I had to say about friends!

-D

From The Beat: More than a few writers in our pages will tell you straight up that some family members will be there for you and some won't, and they'll tell you to trust no one. And it's a scandalous fact about the street game, that in the end every player gets played. There's no strategy to keep you safe, except to quit and go legit. 'Cause if you stay in the street, you'll discover that you can't even trust yourself; you'll wind up doing things to yourself that you'd want to hurt someone else for doing to you! So learn how to be your own friend first, and don't let yourself fall to the same old 'hood curse!

Too Many

What's up Beat? This Tui Tui again, just saying what's up.

I've been to too many group homes. My time is coming, but I go to court soon, so I'll probably just go to another group home. It will be my 8th group home, and I've been to group home to group home violation and all that.

I want to go to camp, but I hope they don't send me to the south because I feel that that's a set up for failure because I'm going to end up fighting up there and that's 'cause I'm not from down south. Like I was saying I've been to too many group homes. So if I keep doing wrong I won't be so lucky next time.

-Tui Tui

From The Beat: A real soldier is one that is willing to go anywhere in order to fulfill his/her mission, and your mission is to do a good program and get out of the system, be it down south, camp, another group home, where ever. You know what it takes to succeed. How bad do you want it?!

No More, No More

i was at a recovery home
and it drove me crazy
in the groups we had
i acted very lazy
but then one day i met this girl
from the girl program
and she touched my heart
the poems she wrote to me were art
but i messed up 'cause
the group home got to me
so i ran — and the group home
won't take me back
so when i promised to
take her on a walk on the seashore
i probably won't see the girl
who touched my heart no more
no more

-Tocee

From The Beat: You tell us that Tocee is Korean for Rabbit; okay, sorry about our confusion. Next: why don't you write the girl? You have her name and address, right? Even if they won't let her read them, they'll be kept along with her personal belongings. And you know she'd love read your poems, and write poems, too.

Runaway

Got to get away
dodging this helicopter
running from the cops,
high speed chase
on the red and blue
just to get away,
bending corners
up over the fence
under a ditch
on top of the roof
any means necessary
just to get away
Moving in a stolo
You can't catch me
I'm the road runner of the streets.

-Babyface

From The Beat: If you have all this why are you running from the police? We know you aren't telling us another one of those wild tales now are you? Get to teaching Babyface. You have so much to offer, leave the macho shhh, for another day, teach the young readers about staying out of places like this.

Success

I want to be a successful person and live. I would like to do the right thing when I get out of this, instead of making the same dumb mistakes. It ain't worth all the pain, hurt and time that I have spent wasted. I think I can be a success not a failure.

-Ant

From The Beat: They say "the first time it's a mistake, but if you were to make the same mistake twice that's where you are to be called a fool." Now what? Tell us your plan?

J'm Gone!

Well, this young Brucie-bo holdin' it down in Camp! I've been here for eight months, and it ain't funny.

My release date is coming up, and I'm gone! But yeah, man, all my ninjas and my pretty boppers I mess with, be cool. To my cousin, Scoot, be cool bra, and we gon' get on when we both out. I'm fits to let this one slide on ice. RIP ANT, B-bo, Crid, JJ, Mike and Tank.

-Brucie-bo

From The Beat: Congratulations on making it through. And no, it ain't funny, so don't play the foo'. And don't come back, just be coo' Enjoy freedom — and responsibility, too!

Be Coo' Jn Them Streets

G-vo! What's up, Beat. This is that young vato from the streets of Newark. I just want to shoot some of the young bucks some good knowledge by sayin' — be coo' out there in them streets!

I am not sayin' don't bang, 'cause I know you'll do your thang anyway; but keep it on the down-low from the policia. Don't let the white man put you behind tall concrete walls, like he did to me!

Watch your backs at all times, and always keep your heads up. One life, no regret. And I'm out.

-Yung Spanky

From The Beat: It's a powerful slogan, "One life, no regret!" But say you do get married and you have a child, and you get caught up riding on a night someone is killed, and you take the rap. Now your child will have no father and your wife no husband, except in letters, snapshots, and prison visits. Maybe in order to survive such a disaster, some go so far as to pretend there is no life outside the walls and society of prison. "One life, no regret!" But there is life outside prison, for your child! And so much to regret.

Skate Rat

Hey, all you haters. We skaters have nothing against you guys. You obviously do though. The reason you probably hate is because we supposedly "destroy" park benches and ledges.

If there was a skate park that suited all of our wildest dreams then we wouldn't be "destroying" public ledges. So don't hate us, hate the city. Start a petition and a fund raser to build an excellent skate park, do it how you want it, build it how we want it. Talk to the skaters you see. Find out what they want in the park. We don't want any confrontations that will lead into angry situations though. Most of us are nice, so don't judges us because we do a rough sport.

-Casey

From The Beat: It seems as if you have issues with your city. We hear you, but at the same time actions speak louder than words. It makes us wonder who's going to be man enough to start that petition. If you want something down you have to do it yourself. Don't talk or place blame, do something!

Revenge Poem

What if the world revolved around me.
Now wouldn't that be a sight to see, naw not really
Because I would F the world,
The way the world F'd me
Imagine white people being hung by the people of color
I bet they feel hella duller ...

-OJ Simpson

From The Beat: We hope you don't mind that we picked a title for you. It seemed to fit... But as long as it's revenge you're after, the best revenge really is success. Don't let hatred control you.

What Up Wit' Me And You

Hey Boo
I see what you goin' through
I see you the life you into
That's why you should get wit me
And come anew
I see struggles you havin' in life
I can try and help you make it alright
I'm not sayin' it'll happen overnight
But together we will keep this shhh

See I've been watchin' you for awhile
From the way you laugh to the way you smile
Yeah I dig the way you wearin' yo' clothes
But I ain't' stupid I know you got hoes

Period point blank I'm tryin' to see
What it do
So what's up with me and you?

-Baby Black Beauty

From The Beat: Nice poem. But we've got to ask — you are willing to overlook the fact that this guy has got hoes because of a smile and the way he wears his clothes? What up with that? Doesn't it make you think about the way he is going to treat you? Hmm. Think.

What You Looking At?

I think other people, like judges and counselors, think of us as just another felon up to no good. Even if we were trying to do good, they think we're lying 'cause it's impossible to do good!

And they also just think of us as just another way to keep the money flowing in, to them! They really don't care about us and what we are going to do with our lives.

-Troop

From The Beat: It'd be nice to have people who care and help out, especially people with so much power over your life. But the one with the most power over your life, is the one you most need to have care about you — and that's you! Do good for you [we don't mean on the grind], and you'll thank yourself for it, too, when you're further on down the line.

There's a Reason

What it be like? Man, I just wanna tell you Beat readers something. I'm young, so I still think young; but I also think like a grown man.

Before I came to Camp, I use' to look at the world this way: like the world is put here for us to go screw up in! But then I started doing a lil' bit of homework, and I see that the world is put here for us to do what God put us here for — and he gave everybody a special talent. Some may be able to play basketball, football, rapping, dancing, and other things.

The ones that's out there doing shhh like sell dope — you can change that and do something with math or someth'; 'cause if you're a dope dealer then you gotta be able to count high bills (unless your block doesn't roll). But there's always a reason for every person in life — if you don't see it, or if you do see it! And that's real.

-Man

From The Beat: We'd say the reason you were put here was to grow up exactly the way you grew up, on the street, doing whatever, rolling, but also hearing death tolling, seeing partners leak life away — till one day, you wake up! God puts the truth not only before your eyes, but also behind, in your mind, where he plants his seed for you to find a tree of knowledge. You've already been through the college of hard knocks, and you took your terminal degree. Now God's plan is for you to experience success, graduated from the street! To do right and be your best!

You ain't ready

Boy you ain't ready
Town business getting heavy
Swanging that four door
fifty-four Chevy
Hitting up the streets
Call me that beast that runs the east
Them girls on my line,
and you know they got to pay me
Call it what you want, take it how you feel
Boy you ain't ready, lets just keep it real
I'm that youngsta, Lil' Whoa, you heard of me?
I ain't hard to find, stop being scared of me
I'm just that one youngsta, that be lil' Whoa!
I mess with the squad, you they ready fo' sure
Stop acting like you hard, boy I play with things
I been giving lessons at the range
Hitting my marks in the dark

-Lil' Whoa

From The Beat: We understand that this is a rap but at the same time we see the same word come up in every rap like this; that word is DEATH. Instead of teaching life you have been programmed to speak death just like every other lost soul we see out there. Success comes on the shoulders of those who are creative and different. Not those who follow in the footsteps of the previous trained boy who have walked too far and fell off a cliff like so many before him. You have the power to stop the genocide, you have the power to stop the killing, you have the power to encourage life. It doesn't seem the world is going to end by natural destruction, it seems more as if it's going to end in human destruction.

What You Lookin' At

man stop lookin' at me
i don't mess wit' you
i know i'm cute
but damn cous' you a dude
lookin' all in my eyes
tryin' to get a better look
but what do you see
do y'all see a crook
or do you see me being myself
feelin' myself
how do you view me
i need to know 'cause i need

-Moe Butter

From The Beat: It's not about crooked or straight, but love or hate. Life in the game condemns you to giving and getting pain. You can't pretend that money's the main thang, 'cause there are other ways to maintain. We respect you, but we see the streets striving to resurrect you in your most desperate mode, setting you up to fall again by the so-called 'cause there ain't no) gangster code.

If Our Love Js Real

If our love is real
Why do I feel the way I feel
Why I don't trust you when you leave
Why not a word you say I actually believe
How can I when all you do is lie to me
Then you try and turn around and tell me it's my insecurities
I can't even tell you all the times you lied
You made me feel powerless all I did was cry
You told me you loved me once before
But I don't think you love me anymore
So why do I feel the way I feel?
If our love is real?

-Baby Black Beauty

From The Beat: When you are in a relationship where love is present there also need to be trust and respect. You ask a good question. "...if your love is real?" What do you think is the answer?

Love And Pain

So many complications why couldn't it just be right. All I did was think of you at night through the beating and the shed of blood, pain tears & most important love.

I miss you so much it strains my mind at night. Dreams, thoughts, unremarkable memories trace my mind. I can only end my words to you with "I love you" - unconditionally and always. We can end these words with "our life that awaits us"

-Teletubie

From The Beat: Love and Pain go hand in hand. Sometimes it hurts so bad - but when it feels good, it feels so good!

Damn, I'm Back in Here Again...

... but this time I'm in here for a warrant and two new felony cases. This time the judge is not playing with me no more, he is sending me to camp, so now I have to be prepared for camp and he told me if I run or get violated, he is sending me to CYA, so hopefully I would pimp this program and get out so I won't have to go the Y. Peace out Fellas.

-Pancake

From The Beat: Well we KNOW you don't want to go to the Y. Do you have a plan for making it through your program, a strategy to keep you from running? What is it?

Look At You Lookin' At Me

Yeah I see you lookin' at me
Can you see my misery?
I cover it up with laugh and smiles
But that all dies down after a while
I know you see my outer shape
But can't you see all that is fake
What matters is the feelings inside
But since you're so judgmental they stay in and hide
Now look at you lookin' at me
You heard some things that you could not see.

-Baby Black Beauty

From The Beat: People whom are judgmental always seem to miss out on great things in life. If someone has a hard time looking past your outer appearance, well that's their loss. Is it possible that this person looking at you isn't judgmental at all, and you are the one making the mistake of assuming? Well, either way, the lesson here is— keep an open mind. You'll find that things are never as they seem. People will always surprise you.



Ain't No Discussin'

to survive in this jungle wilderness
we was raised by wolves
and the scavengers
instant like an animal
but it toughens us
put a whole lot of thug in us
it paid off
'cause can't nobody mess wit' us
don't get it twisted
i know anyone can get touched
but my style of life
is too quick to bust
and too swift to touch
talking angles to
let me straighten that shhh out for you

-Zack

From The Beat: We printed about half of your poem, and we admit your rhymes here are strong. But this is your chance to go deeper than the game — 'cause nobody's quicker than bullet when your enemies pull it and it's got your name. It's a blessing you're alive today. And now you're here in Camp with a chance to change your ways. Next time it might be YA.

I'm So Alone

I'm so alone, sometimes I wish I had a clone, someone to talk to so I wouldn't be alone, so sad in my cell, this place got me feelin' like I'm in hell, I hope my mom is good and doin' well, she picked me off the floor every time I fell, and every day I pray at night, that everything is cool' and be all right. As I lay on my bed and ask myself why, my vision gets blurry so I wipe a tear from my eye, I try hard to smile instead of cry. No one cares and they won't ask why. Sometimes I wish I was a bird that can fly, so I could be free and touch the sky.

I'm going to a group home tomorrow

-Flaco

From The Beat: The Hall has a way of making us feel this way. But you've got good news. You are on your way to a group home. Be that bird - this group home may be the opportunity that you need. You will be able to touch the sky - what are your dreams? Follow them. This group home is the first step to accomplishing them. Stick with it and stay focused. The sky is the limit.

Temporary Release

I had a TR, "temporary release," to see a therapist! She said I was too far gone!

No, that was a joke, she said that I have a chance! Well I did all the tests that I have to be honest on so I can get more treatment so that I can get out of here soon. I got to go Beat. I love you mom.

-Brent

From The Beat: You got us for a minute! But we know you not that messed up. You'll be out of the Hall soon - and on with the rest of your life. Good for you Brent!

Hey Beat Within

This is Rockwell aka Junior. Today was cool. I went to court, they said I have to go to a group home, but for what, to keep me safe or to keep me locked up? I guess my behavior was not so good, because now I am leaving the hood.

Maybe it is a nice idea to go, if I stay here what would I know? The same thing I seen for years, Leave and come back with new fears, like what basketball team will I get on or how are my grades going to look like in school or where am I going to work to get some money so I can support my family and myself.

Them are my biggest fears when I come back home. Will I stay doing good, or will I go back to doing wrong, that is what I don't want to do.

So I will stay with God and continue being cool I would rather make them than break the rules, that is my vote from me to you. Stay up and stay in school, even if you don't like it. Just go like Nike, just do it.

-James

From The Beat: You know the plan. We wish you the best in succeeding in your group home. A successful group home program will only give you confidence to do well and take on the temptations that exist in your community.

Life and Choices

I am only 18 going on 19, and I've been through my share of ups and downs in life, not to say my life was been all bad, but I've took some shots and made very bad choices. And now that I'm locked up I've really gotten a chance to reflect on my life and I've learned that making good decisions in your life early, I am certain that you will make it if you continue.

Now I know everyone isn't perfect and we all make mistakes, but to all the younger teens coming up, please, it's imperative, it is very important that you stop and think and make very good choices in whatever you do in life, especially when you are going to do something wrong with your life.

-Cb

From The Beat: This is great advice, and it sounds like you acquired this wisdom the hard way. Do you think you've learned to make better decisions in the future? Can you give us an example?

Navy

I want to go to the Navy when I turn eighteen. I don't know why but the thought just came to mind three days ago. I don't know if I really am going to go but I just might.

-Lil' Cutie

From The Beat: Okay. Well as long as your thinking about it - think about the good and the bad. Make a smart decision. Don't rush into anything. You are a mature young lady. Take your time and make the right decision for you.

"Purp" and "Hen" pt.2

Purple and hen, damn I like to spend.
Give me a 40 dollar bottle of some hen,
then go get that purple

'cause you know we need that purple.

We would let that female smoke, but we just won't 'cause we don't know where that mouth been. Ya know.

When we off that purple and hen we feelin our selves we don't care if them hatin' ass popos trying to mess with us

I smoke purple I drink hen,
damn, I can not wait till I pass out and do it again.

Pass that hen pass that purple.

I'm on one tonight

I don't care about no females in short skirts.

-Young Toi

From The Beat: Never has the world known so many young men to like purple, until they came with Mary J and we're not talking about the singer Mary J. Life is precious!! It's more out there besides purple.

Don't Come To The Ranch

What's up, Beat? Or should I say, "What it do?" Me chillin' in the Ranch. Our basketball team lost to Richmond and Oakland. Yeah, man, I didn't really do shhh, but I tried. I'm a forward. But, yeah, man, holla.

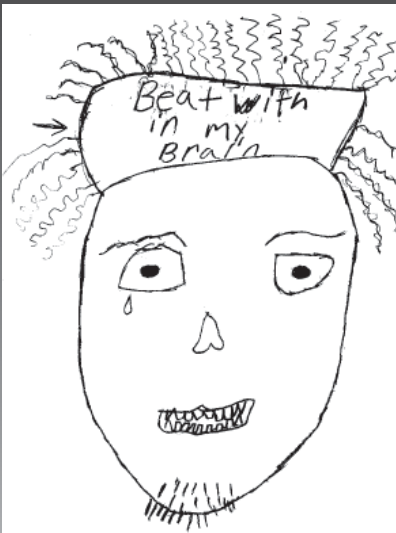
I can't wait 'til I get out this dump. I am already to hit the streets and be all I can be.

Holla, man, and don't come to the Ranch. The food's ok, and the girl? It's none! Ha ha.

Gone! Out! Peace.

-Young Project LCRS

From The Beat: Sorry about the basketball team's losses. We hope you had fun playing anyway. When you say you plan to be all you can be when you hit the streets, what do you mean? If you mean returning to the life that led you to the hall — thinking that this time you can escape the consequences — then we expect you'll soon be on your way to other lock-ups, none as nice as the Ranch. But if you mean you're going to try a new way, a way that respects yourself and others, that values your own freedom, then you'll be on your way to a proud and productive future. We can't make that choice for you, even though you know what choice we'd like you to make.



Opening A Youth Center

I will open a youth center for kids to come. It's free, but I have to make money, so I go to the rich people and ask them for money to help the kids. Then I can help people like me to be good. And that is all I am going to write see you later.

-Suzuki B1

From The Beat: What would you tell the rich people that would make them give you money? What kinds of activities and services would you want in your youth center? Would you work there? If there were a youth center in your neighborhood, what would it have that would help you the most?

Missin' My Family

Today I'm locked up again in juvenile facing some serious time with seven different charges. I'm sitting in my cell every day thinkin' about how much I hurt my family, and how many times I lied to them and told them I was gonna change.

But I ended up going back to the same thing.

I missin' my family, thinkin' of the worst that I'll never live in their household from now till I'm 18. But hopefully, one day I go back home and be with them.

-Danny B1

From The Beat: When you told your family that you were going to change, did you believe it, or did you know you were not telling the truth? What do you want to do now, change and stay with your family that you miss so much, or go back to the life that brought you here, and took you away from them? The answer to that question will tell us which is more important to you, your family or your homies.

Fake Feelin' It

One day I was wit' some of my folks in Oakland. We was just smoking and drinking, having the times of our lives. Then I was like, "Man, I got to get back to the city and I ain't tryin' to hop on no Bart or bus." So at first we was on some females wit' some cars to get a ride, but we was fake feelin' it, so we came across this knock (good looking girl) with a car.

My Oakland patna had some work for her, so we all hopped in her car and busted the sale. We didn't want the money, all we wanted was the car. One of the other Oakland cats wanted some sex. The fiend gave everybody some sex, and let us into the Volvo and took us to put some gas in it.

Boom! I got my ride back to the city, feelin' lovely from the sex. But I felt bad, because the whole way I was thinking about what dope fiends would do to get high.

I don't like the way dope can mess people up, but you got to do what you got to do to get what you want and any way you want.

-Savage B1

From The Beat: You may feel genuine sympathy for the woman who's addicted to drugs, but aren't you really contributing to this woman's problems as much as the drugs by taking advantage of her, Savage? You did it because you weren't feeling BART or the bus, but that seems pretty lame to us. Can you imagine yourself with the strength to stop your homies from messing with this woman, or at least to have left her alone yourself? If not, don't you think that dope is messing you up, too?

My Girl

My girl is the love of my life. Every day I count the days till I see her again. I hope and think that she feels the same way for me that I feel for her. I don't blame her if she cheats on me. Hey, I would be mad but life goes on.

Five minutes on the phone cannot tell how I feel for her. I hope I don't sound weak, or maybe it's because I've been in here for a while. But I have never felt this way before and I think it is love or something. Waiting till I see her, kissing a picture that don't kiss back. Hoping that she is still only my girl.

-Young DS B5

From The Beat: Love is a powerful motivator, especially when it's directed at one individual. We admire you for not blaming someone on the outside who is "cheating" on someone on the inside. If the roles were reversed (if she were locked up and you were waiting for her), would you "cheat?" Now that you have a real love in your life, will you be able to put her above your love for the street? We (and she?) hope so.

On My Block

On my block it is going to be the same shhh it has always been. Somebody will die, and a lot of people will cry.

Ninjas on my block is grimy. You can always find a ninja on the block at any time of day. SFPD rolling through harassing people because they are too slow and can't catch us, so they get mad and hate on everybody they see.

On my block soft ninjas get popped and hard ninjas hold they glocks on my block.

-Young Ds B5

From The Beat: Do you know anybody who used to stay strapped, and is now six feet under? We say that because we can't agree with your definition of "hard" and "soft" when it comes to describing people. It requires much more strength, in our eyes, to do the right thing than to use a gun for any purpose at all. Of course, we agree with you that the things on your block will not change — until you do!

Right Place, Wrong Time

What it do? This is Young Randolph, and I just wanna holla at you about the 'hood. Most of the people that die or are killed are by just being on their own turf. I know why most people stay on they block, because they need that paper, and try to find a quick come up. And I'm one of the victims.

I want to slow my life down

-Lil' Randolph B1

From The Beat: What makes a block someone's turf? Do you own your turf? If you walk on our block, have you violated our turf? How did you become a victim? Tell us about that.

I don't like the way dope can mess people up, but you got to do what you got to do to get what you want and any way you want.

ROP Ain't Cool

This is Diamond Bad News, and I'm back. I was at ROP, and all those white people beat the shhh out of me. ROP ain't cool, so don't go up there. Man, all you do up there is run and work out. Man, I'm gon tell you one more time, don't go. More later...

-Diamond Bad News B5

From The Beat: Well, we can tell you that we hate to read or hear the words, "I'm back." We're sorry you are, but if ROP is as shady as you make it out to be, we can understand why. We have a couple of questions, though. You make it sound like the staff at ROP is hella racist, so do all the Black youngsters there get beat up, or just you? Also, is it possible that ROP might be good program for some, but a bad program for others? If you were designing a program to deal with your situation, what would it look like?

Giving Back To My Community

I can't wait till I'm twenty-one, 'cause I could give back to the community by building a garage. My friend will work in it.

After I make a lot of money I will donate some money to the poor and the country that people doesn't three meals a day 'cause I feel sorry for kids from the country that is born poor (they need to eat!)

-Lil' Racer B1

From The Beat: We like your idea of a garage in your community. Why would your friend work there? Does he know a lot about cars? Would you give all your money away, or would you spend some on yourself? What would you buy for yourself?

Can't Wait

Man, what it do Beat? Me, nothing. Just chillin' up here in this unit waitin' until I go to court on Thursday to see what it do, ya dig?

But I had a conversation today with the homies, and they telling me that they doin' it on the cheddar tip. Man, they tell me like this, "We can't wait till you come home. We gon have it fo' you, B!"

I just kept on smiling, feel me? I can't wait till I go home. Boy, real talk. Yo, anyway though, I got to cut alright?

-Mei Da Star B5

From The Beat: We're not sure we feel you or not. It depends on what you "can't wait" for. If it's to go back to the block and continue doing what led you here, then we can expect to see you again, since only a fool would expect different consequences from the same behavior. On the other hand, if you "can't wait" to start living for your future, to start taking the responsibility that goes with freedom, then go for it!

Court

Tomorrow, January 19, 2005, I have court. I am nervous. I wonder where will they send me. To a group home or can I go home? This is my 2nd case. I stayed here since December 2, 2004.

I regret what I did because I missed a lot of things I was supposed to do — friends' birthday parties, RO competition, Xmas shopping, New Years, fire crackers and family dinners.

-Asnbum B1

From The Beat: When you did the things you did that brought you here, did you think there would be no consequences? Now that you are experiencing those consequences (for the second time), do you plan to change anything about how you live your life when you touch down again? What will you do — and what will you not do — so that you can enjoy all those things that you've been missing?

Wear LIP Tees

What's up Beat? This is young Chunkum. I just want to say I'm getting tired of that RIP shhh. I'm not disrespectin' or nothing, but stop wearing those RIP tees and shhh! I'm hella mad 'cause my ninja just got killed. One love my ninja. RIP CJ.

If you're going to sport something, sport a LIP tee. (Live In Peace). For real, it's only one life to live and just live, 'cause you got family. Just do right by your family. If you got kids, you're really messing up.

So I'm gone, son. Just stay up. One love to everybody.

-Young Chunkum B4

From The Beat: Why are you so anti the RIP Tees, when you offer your own RIP to your fallen homie. We're sorry you have to bear this pain, but it's all too common in the pieces we read. We'd love to see those LIP Tees you're talking about. Do they really exist, or is this just in your mind? If they don't exist, you should produce and sell them. It would be a legit way to make some money, and a positive message to your community, too.

Street Life

Living the street life is not cool — having to get money on your own, selling to get what you want, risking getting grabbed by the cops.

A part of the life come from your community you live in and the people you're around. I am in YGC looking at four walls in this box. See men from the time I wake up to the time I go to sleep.

Be cool lil' sis. Do the time, don't let the time do you. One love, your brother.

-Royce B4

From The Beat: Yes, it's messed up to get money on your own, but you don't have to risk it to get something you want. There is always the legit way. If you continue doing the things that got you here to begin with, then you'll be spending lots of time with boys and men — and no time with girls and women. Is that enough to make you want to change? What, exactly, do you mean when you advise your sister to "do the time, don't let the time do you." We see that a lot, but we're never sure exactly what is meant. So, spell it out for us.

Learning From Falling

What's crackin', Beat? Me, I'm coo'. Just stressing. I feel stupid comin' back here. I caught another charge. PO tryna recommend CYA. I swear to God, I messed up, but I gotta learn from my mistakes.

-J-One B5

From The Beat: If you learn from your mistakes, then you are definitely not stupid. Yes, you made a mistake and caught a case. We hope the lesson you learned is that you can't go back to business as usual without paying the price as usual (which you're paying now). Everybody falls. The difference between success and failure is whether you pick yourself up again.

I shed so many tears on the inside but never able to let the inside out

Yesterday Was MLK's B-Day

I was just in my room just thinking about the day when King was young. He was one of the most powerful people in the world 'cause he did not fight. He did not use guns. He used his mouth. That's why they killed him, just like all the other powerful black people.

You should know about your Black history, about what our people had to go through. A lot of them died just being Black. So if you don't know, ask your mom or your grandfather. Peace

-Young Chunkum B4

From The Beat: You are right, MLK was a powerful person because he did not use violence to resolve problems or make people listen to him, he used his mouth. He did fight, but in a different, non-violent way, and the power of his example helped to crumble institutional racism in the South. Now, if the rest of us could learn from him, maybe there wouldn't be so much violence on the street nowadays. History is important, so learn it. Is MLK your favorite past Black leader, or do you have others that you admire also? Who? Why?

Dirt

I've done a lotta dirt in these 17 years
I shed so many tears
on the inside but never able to let the inside out
I'm too strong to stand around and pout
Life is stressful as hell, it makes me wanna shout
I ain't really had a family life
I guess that's why I'm so triffin'
I can't even see me wit' a wife and kids
I'm on the block selling this dope
I'm lost to these streets
and can't nobody find me, I'm in too deep
I'm out here hustlin' to eat
too paranoid to sleep
I gotta hold heat jus' to feel at peace
I'm another victim to these streets
Only I'm not dead
I'm trying to get ahead
But these crab-ass punks keep pulling me back
Leave me alone, man, if you don't want me to clap
at ya boy
This thang here ain't a toy
Lord save me
I wanna grow old to see my grandbaby
sittin' next to a beautiful ol' lady
that was the one to bear my baby
This life is really crazy
I jus' hope I'm strong enough to survive
Be real, I'm not tryin' to die
I jus' want my piece of the pie

-Cutty Bang B4

From The Beat: That pie is big enough for everyone out there to get a piece, so if you want it, you have to work for it in the right way. There is no such thing as "in too deep." At The Beat, we are surrounded by young men and women who were in much deeper than you, and then made choices to turn in a different direction. It was not easy for any of them, but they chose the hard way instead of the easy way, and now they are reaping the rewards. So own your choices. Don't pass them off as "can't change" or "in too deep." Understand that you hold your future in your own hands. Hustling and dope dealing won't get you a damn thing, but more of the same. You ask the Lord for help, but what do you think the Lord is asking of you? Are you answering His prayers for you?

Brush These Haters Off

Brush these haters off
'Cause it don't matter what they do
They say they got cho man
But in the end it's only you!
Brush these haters off
'Cause you know they actin' foul
It ain't worth yo' time
'Cause you know they jealous now
Brush these haters off
'Cause they know they wanna be you
Don't stress it now, ma
Just remain true
Brush these haters off
'Cause the game is in yo' hands
Screw the bullshhh
'Cause it's always more than just one man
Brush these haters off
'Cause they ain't got no life
They stalkin' and jackin'
But you still known as the wife
Brush these haters off
'Cause you know you better than that
I'm livin' the life of a Virgo
And just now realizing these females are hoodrats
Brush these haters off
'Cause the name of the game is survival
You gon' rise and be on top
'Cause they chose to be yo' rival.

-Priscilla GU

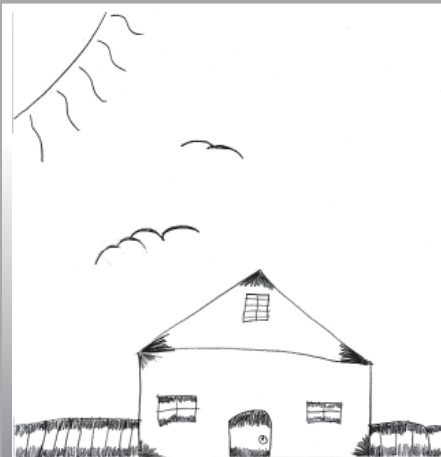
From The Beat: We appreciate that you advise people to "brush haters off." What's important, too, is not to worry about why folks are hating, but to just take care of your own business without having them push you to take actions you'll regret. Do you take this advice yourself?

My Business

If I could start my own business, it would be an after school program that would make everyone want to come and hangout and learn about things they thought would be boring.

-Alexis GU

From The Beat: We love the idea that you'll show people that learning isn't boring. How would you do it — exciting, interesting teachers; "real world" examples?



Helping The Kids

If I made my own business, I would have to help the kids who been in the system like jail, group homes, and foster homes. I can teach them how to survive this and show them things they never seen.

-Tasharie YTEC

From The Beat: Would you want to teach them how to survive the system, or how to avoid it? Do you feel like you know enough to teach these skills? If so, are they helping you survive and prosper? What things would you like to show the kids that they've never seen before?

Da Halls

I ain't going to say that I am doing time, six to seven months ain't shhh. I know homeboys and peeps that are doing twenty-five to life. But being in the Hall with a couple of enemies and a couple of homeys from the block just holding it down.

Always doing the same shhh every freaking day, but being in this room with a bed and four walls to see, makes you think a lot — family, being on the block, your female. I also think of hella possibilities I had and things that I done. I know when I get out I am going to do the same shhh, go to the block and do the damn thing. I know one day I will open my eyes and take the right road, but in the meantime I just keep gangbangin'. So screw the Hall and the system.

-Big Oso, B2

From The Beat: That "one day" isn't promised to us all. Life can be as short as a rat peaking over a piece of cheese. You either get serious about your life or you're going to start to see it slowly but surely get serious about you.

Life In The Streets

Life in the streets ain't no joke
People think it's a game till somebody they
love gets smoked.

Life in the streets is a hustle,

Hittin' licks, sellin' dope

Can't never go broke.

-LaToya GU

From The Beat: What do you think keeps people from seeing the reality of the streets? Is it the money, the challenge, the belief that they don't know anything else? Are you caught up in this, too?

Don't Say It

Don't ever say you ain't going back to jail again because it will happen to you because I said it and I went back a couple of times. But if you get out, you better not do anything stupid on the block or you will be back. Everybody stay up.

-Back again, B2

From The Beat: This is something that's vital for every man or woman getting out of incarceration to remember. A lot of us preach while we're in there, but forget about it once we're out here. Just remember that your head was screwed on straight when you were up in there, what can you do to keep it that way when you're on the outs?

People Don't Understand

Well, people wouldn't have much to ask this man, because he may just bullshhh or what not. If I were to ask him a typical question, I would ask him, though, now looking back on what he did, why did he kill those ladies. Also, I would ask him now that he's been locked up and about to be killed, does he regret what he's done?

-Theresa GU

From The Beat: It's always interesting to wonder if someone's telling you the truth, because the truth is, we can never know that. What do you think he would say?

Love Is Like A Rose

Love is like a rose
When watered you will bloom
When left alone you will be the petal that drops
But when shined you will rise
To be strong and beautiful
Love is on the eyes of the beholder
Love is do' key
Learn to love yourself and you will be loved
Love is like a rose
We will bloom

-Harold B4

From The Beat: We cannot agree with you more! So, what are you doing to bloom?

Locked Up

What it do Beat? It's yo' little mama Lareesha. Well, it was the first time I got locked up, January 10, 2005. I was livin' on the streets and kept running away from home. I was in foster care since I was one year old, now I'm 16 doin' it big on the streets with my ninjas.

Well me and my patna got caught stealing at Nordstrom's. I felt stupid as hell. Well now I'm sittin' up in the Hall (YGC).

Well to get with the point, it is that ya people need to keep ya head up and stay strong. See, these days, ninjas be hatin' and be tryin' to play you. So through it all, God still loves you. So to all, keep it real lit and keep ya head up.

-Lil' Ma Lareesha GU

From The Beat: We like that you call yourself "Lil' ma" seeing as you didn't have the gift of your own mother taking care of you all of he time, or maybe at all. We hope this name means that you know how to be a good mother to yourself and others. Now, from the perspective of a good mother, what do you need to do child so that this is your last trip to the Hall. (By the way, a good mother will know that "doing it smarter" is not the right answer.)

Questions For The Soon-To-Be Executed

I would as Donald Beardslee if he's thinking about his family.

What's he thinking in his head?

Is he scared?

What was he thinking when he did all that stuff?

What would his last words be to his family?

How is your family feeling?

What's the last thing you want to do before you die?

Are you feeling mad about the situation you're in?

What's the first thing you thought about when you heard you were going to get the death penalty?

Why did you do it?

Were you angry at the people you killed?

How do your wife and kids feel about what you did?

Is your wife depressed about what you did?

Were you scared when they took you to jail about it?

Did you plead guilty or innocent?

How did they catch you?

Rest in peace, Donald Beardslee.

-Michael B4

From The Beat: Every question you ask is a good one. If we had more to suggest, it would be: "What can you advise me so that I won't follow in your footsteps?" We appreciate your RIP for Mr. Beardslee.

Doin' Hard Time

I live in these streets amongst the carnage

And carry guns to be the hottest

Ninjas die over trivial thangs every day, maybe it's nonsense

Believe in Dr. King's promise and stop spitting on my dreams

Live and let be, leave me alone to be me

If justice is blind then let me judge just what we see

Hunger for knowledge but feed with negativity

But these are the things we see living amongst concrete jungle

Survival is a struggle

Left with no choice but to push a bundle,

But one fumble

You caught in sling behind bars

Doing time is hard

We all doin' time when you're living on the boulevard

-Yadadimean B4

From The Beat: Everyone has choices they can pick, and it's the choices one picks that bring them to where they are right now. You have a choice, we have a choice, the person next to you has a choice. It all comes down to choices. Even though you say you have no choice but to "push a bundle," we know there are other choices you could make. How do we know? Because other youngsters in your situation have made different choices. It's time to take responsibility for the choices you make, and not dismiss them so lightly as "no choice." Nice piece.

Growing Up Before It's Too Late

Today, I heard my parents talking about good health. My father was saying how good it is to eat porridge in the morning and at night.

Then he said to my mom, "I got a decade to live life uh!"

When he said that I got worried. He is kinda old. So now on I'm gonna act more mature so he could be happy.

-Phu YTEC

From The Beat: Your father's comment sounds like it had the effect of cold water in the face. It woke you up. You're right, all our parents and elders (and us, too), ultimately age and die, so it's time to grow up and do right, and bring your dad some contentment and happiness — and pride in his son. By the way, we agree with your father, it is good to eat porridge in the morning and at night, especially when the weather is cold.

Stress, Love And Regret

My life can sometimes be stressful from love,

That I regret.

Love can sometimes feel good

But when someone avoided your love.

It causes stress

And makes you regret

Some times that you

Spent together.

-LaDethra GU

From The Beat: So what is it that causes the stress, the fact that the person you love doesn't want to spend time with you or love you the way you want to be loved? Think really hard about what you want from your lover so you can find someone who can meet those needs. Good luck.

I Got Love

I got love for the people on the streets

I got love for people who got love for me

I got love for the people in jail

I got love for them up in they cells

I got love for the people in Lakeview

I got love for the people that's true

I got love for my Demare' ya

I got love for the people in the Bay.

-Deshay GU

From The Beat: And we all have love for you!

Wish I Wasn't Here

I wish that I did not come here 'cause I would be out on my block with my little bro' 'cause we so tight. We be doing everything together, even we ride by ourselves together.

When I get out of here, I will not be hanging outside like I used to. I will be inside with my son and my daughter. This is the last time coming here 'cause I know what to do when I get out of here, I will take care of my people.

-Ellis B2

From The Beat: It seems that you are now thinking right, friend. Is it the pressure of being locked up that is causing you to think the way you're thinking now? Do you think your little bro' will follow your example and stay safe and out of trouble?

School For All

Well, a program that I would like to start would be a program that would help people widen their thinking on making money. I would build a community service program and reach all the people that haven't had a chance to go to school for whatever reason and teach them the main things they need to know to survive in this world. Also they would not need to pay and there would be no age limit.

-Theresa GU

From The Beat: What an excellent idea, Theresa. What would you teach these people?

Chapter 1: Almost Dead

I was at my cousin's house, chillin', makin' some bombs out of Piccolo Petes cause it was 4th of July. We had a lot of Piccolo Petes so we made over 50 of them. We started from when we woke up until the sun came down and it was black outside. So we got ready. We all dressed in all black — black shirt, black hoody, black jeans, and black shoes. There was a hell of us dressed in all black, backpack full of Piccolo Pete bombs, M-80 roman candles, bricks of firecrackers and bottle rockets and hella other illegal shhh mobbin' on bikes. We must've felt like we was the "Biker Boys" but we wasn't mobbin' on motorcycles.

So we started mobbin'. The first step we made was a corner store in San Bruno. So I walked in and said, "Wassup, Mike?"

"Shhh, just chillin'. What you need?"

"Let me get a carton of Newport 100's." So I got it and got on. Gave a pack to each of my homies and got on. So we started mobbin' to the next city. When we got there one of my homies pulled out one of his Roman candles and we saw a group of dudes at a park so we rode there, and that's when all of us took out roman candles. Lit a pope, put it by the string, and pointed to where the group of dudes were at. All of the sudden you see colorful balls flying straight towards them.

"Bap!" one pops in front of a dude's face and all of them started running but we kept on following because we had bikes so we caught up. After it was done we turned around and got on to look for our next victims. Our next victims were the cops. The cops were probably looking for eight guys but we were looking for a black and white car with a big badge painted on the side of it. We didn't give a rat's ass about what we were gonna do to the cop.

So we were riding down a street and a cop is mobbin' through that street slowly, so half went to one sidewalk and the other half went to the other side. So we got our roman candles, fire crackers, and bottle rockets. As soon as we got side to side with the cop you hear a war going on because we just kept on firing at the cop's car, throwing fireworks into the window, lighting up bombs and throwing it under the car so we got on, racing down the cuts to get to our homie's house to go hide.

We got there and headed to the backyard and posted for an hour or two just smoking some of that Bob and knockin' that Bob gettin' hifey. After two hours we got on but without the bikes, because it was too hot so we decided to foot it.

Walking down this street where people don't like us. So we walked by this one house and I didn't like that house because the dudes that lived there tried to jump my cousin. So I pulled out two roman candles and two M1000, lit both of them and threw it to the backyard and then lit up my roman candles then "BOOM! BOOM!" both of the M1000 went off. And me and a couple of my homies were firing the roman candles and the door opened and the fire balls were going inside the house so we booked and as we were running, some dudes started running after us and as they were chasing us I tripped 'cause I tried jumping over a bush but I didn't cause I was too blasted and drunk. I tried getting up and when I did, I turned around looking down two barrels.

"What the hell you trying to do, punk?!" the first words out of their mouth. "Ya'll tried jumping my cousin," I said.

"Give a shhh if I tried jumping your cousin." Then I looked to the right and I seen a lady running towards us. She stopped and told the dudes that had the gun on me to put it down and when they did a cop car was driving towards us and as it got closer it was the cop car that me and my homies messed with earlier. So he stopped and got out and said, "Is there a problem here," and as he said that I was heated because I fell and had two guns pointed at my head so I started cussing at them saying "Screw you, and screw your sons too," 'cause that's how I funk, I funk to the max, I take it to another level. After that the cop said, "You need to watch your language young man before I arrest you" and I said, "You ain't arresting shhh," and then he tried rushing me and I countered his attack and he tripped on my foot and fell flat on his face so I started to book. Hopped a couple of fences and posted in the backyard for a couple hours.

While I was in the backyard I was thinking about the conflict that just happened. The cop saved my life. If it wasn't for him I probably would have died or got shot up.

Hours later I went back to the homies' house and all of them were over there just chillen and one of my homies asked where I've been and I told them what happened and we are started to laugh and one of my homies passed me a blunt and he pressed play on the stereo, chocking to the sounds of Bob Marley getting lifted and tipsy.

The next day I woke up to a bad feeling on my arm and I looked and it was a long road rash on my arm. I woke up one of my homies to see if he wanted to walk to the store with me and he did. As we were walking I seen this dude that pulled the gun out on me. "Hey, remember last night?"

(To Be Continued)

-Lil' Marley

From The Beat: There's so much to say, but first off we're terrified of part two. Not terrified like the fun kind of terrified when you're at a horror movie and know that the bad guy's lurking around the corner; terrified like the sick to your stomach 'cause there's no good that seems to be able to come from this situation. The fireworks, though illegal and all, were somewhat harmless fun, but what were you thinking shooting up a cop car and your rival's house? And moreover, when the cop saved you, you called him out [when that line was read out loud in the office, someone said "That kid's stupid," and it's hard to disagree]. The only thing that saves this piece from the trash heap is your recognition, after the fact, that the cop saved your life. We're left wondering whether he cares more for your life than you do your own.

Feel This

What's up wit' ya'll playing games,, man? You know I got luv for sum of y'all... Man, I just wanted to let y'all know that even when you're in a relationship, don't abuse your woman or accuse them of things 'cause that ain't right. Ya dig?

-Lamei

From The Beat: You're right, it ain't right, and we dig. The flipside is showing love for yourself, not allowing yourself to be in situations where you're abused. What have you learned about how to determine if a relationship's healthy?

Life As You Know It

Life as you know it
Is coming to an end
So I stay and kick it
Straight chilling with my friends
Sometimes I tend
To make wrong decisions
They take me closer to death or
A step away from prison
Know, listen
I hear my heart in my chest
I'm steady breathing
I listen to the judge
Making his decision
I got one more chance
So I could go out
And keep on living

-Demon

From The Beat: Will you continue living the way you've been living even though you know you could end up dead or in prison? What's so interesting about your particular lifestyle? Do us a favor and move away from the past because it's over. Your future starts right now!



Ouch

Forget it, forget it, forget it. I don't like Democrats because they are stupid and I don't like Republicans, but they are better than Democrats because they kill terrorists.

-Pedro

From The Beat: Why do you think the Democrats are stupid? Do you think we can kill all the terrorists and then be safe? Do you think the people we go to war with think we are terrorists? What do you think will make the world a safer place?

So Happy

I am so happy because my momma been sayin' that she was not going to come get me; well, she wasn't really sure if she was coming or not. And I cried and cried and prayed that she would come and be here for me, and I let all that other shhh go as far as being on the streets and let the life go to go home with my momma.

And she said she might come and I'm so so so so so so happy. I can touch the sky. I can't wait to see her on the twenty-fourth. I'm a hug her so tight.

-Shay Shay

From The Beat: More important than hugging her so tight, what will you do to make sure that you're able to stay with her on the outs? What will you do instead of running the streets?

Stunnin'

Cry Baby: What it do?

Yo' Boo: Nothin' Boo, feel me, just can't stand these messy females.

CB: Yeah, 'cause they hella messy.

YB: Okay don't hate on these pieces.

CB: 'Cause we shake it like some salt shakers.

YB: You know what Cry Baby, I hate how these females smile in yo' face but talk mess behind yo' back.

Sharky Mack: I'ma interrupt for a minute. I shake the haters and I still shine. Dey only hate 'cause dey ain't got it like me and y'all, feel me?

Jessie: Yeah they can't stun on us, they can't see us about nothing 'cause they hella fake.

CB: But what they really need to do is run up or shut up!

YB: And we all know y'all hate the taste of our names in ya'll mouth. And flip yo' hair.

-Yo' Boo, Cry Baby

From The Beat: For folk who are shakin' them off, it sure seems like the hate gets under your skin. The trip is that this piece is a form of hating itself — by pretending to be above it all, you knowingly add fuel to the fire. Write something real.

Since I Been Back

This be yo' boy Funk-E. I came back January 8th. I finally got kicked out of camp. Hey, what can you say? Shhh happens.

Since I been back I have read two books. A lot of the things I read I took to heart. I am not going to take life for granted no more. Being locked up just ain't for me. There are too many important things in life.

I have been clean of drugs for ten months now. I am finally thinking clear now. School is going to be important to me. I am not tryin' to end my life like this.

To be continued...

-Funk-E

From The Beat: Congratulations on your ten months of sobriety. How much of that time was spent on the outs? It's hard to keep such a commitment as not taking life for granted any more. Though we don't believe it's impossible to obtain, we do believe it's improbable because it's human nature to take things for granted. We wish you the best, but don't want you to set yourself up for disappointment.

**I have been clean of drugs for ten months now.
I am finally thinking clear now.**

Released

February 8th is my released date
 November 1st is when I came in
 That's too much time to be spending in this shhhhohle
 Always waiting too freaking long for a sit down or a stand up
 The food don't even get me full
 What the hell is a snack supposed to do to my body
 That's a teaser to me
 But anyways, once I get released
 I'm straight to the toilet
 Take a shhh for as long as I want
 Then hit the showers, no more dudes
 Looking at me when I wash my hair and while I'm scrubbing my ass
 Then straight to the store, pack of 'Ports
 And hella peach Optimos 'cause I'm finna get zooted
 Then wait on the next month 'cause that's when my baby girl get out
 Can't wait to hold hands and hold her close to me
 Play fight with her, nibble on her ears, take her to the movies
 And most of all, share a blunt with her
 Rasta till I die

-Li'l Marley

From The Beat: For the first time in any of your pieces, we feel like we start to see glimpses of the real you, the you that hides under the layers of pot smoke and gang identity. How are you going to stay out once you get out? Are your freedom, your privacy, your girl, and the ability to bathe and use the bathroom in private motivation enough to stay free?

Coming Back

What's up everybody? I'm back and been better. Got kicked out of the EMP house arrest. Now they trying to send me to camp again. I never thought I was coming back, but police came at me like I wasn't rehabilitated and things happened.

I just hope at court on the 31st that my witnesses come through and tell the courts that I got beat up for no reason. They either got something against me or my family. But I left that town and now I'm back in South City 'til I blew on some purple. A lot of staff are mad and disappointed at me for this situation but I can't help it. I feel I was harassed from a personal vendetta. Well anyway, I'll holla back next week. You know I've done too much time to be doing time. Later.

-Ap

From The Beat: There's nothing we hate hearing more in the hall than the words, "I'm back." But we know you too well to disbelieve anything you're telling us. However, we also feel like there's something you aren't telling us. Just a gut feeling. (Maybe from those two little words that can cover so much territory: "...things happened.") Could you have done anything differently? Was the situation totally out of your control? How so?

A Dream

Just the other night I had a dream about you. We was kickin' it on Alberni with my crew. We capping, play fighting and getting money.

-Warren

From The Beat: A great start to what seems like an unfinished piece. Please keep going because we're interested in what you'll say next. We're particularly interested if you can find a meaning in this dream that speaks to many people, beyond just the person you dreamt about.

Congratulations Merv!

Merv, I just want to congratulate you on graduating and getting a college degree. You just proved it to everyone that we can do it too!

-Sharky Mack

From The Beat: Damn straight. Merv keeps quiet most of the time, so not everyone's aware of his tremendous accomplishment nor of what an incredible man he is.

A lot of staff are mad and disappointed at me for this situation but I can't help it.

Stressing Right Now

Today I don't feel like writing, because today is a depressed day for me. My PO came and talked to me and told me I'll be doing 75 more days, and I think it's not fair 'cause I think she should give me a chance to go home and try to get my baby back.

After my little baby boy got taken away by CPS and it's really hard for me to be in here knowing that my baby is with some strangers that I don't even know who they are. I'm really stressing off what's going on right now.

-Diana

From The Beat: We'd be stressing, too. However bad 75 days looks, it's just 75 days and it'll be over soon enough. How can you plan for the life you're going to lead back on the outs, a life that proves to CPS your ability to take care of your child? How can you help your child grow up healthy and happy?

MARIN

The Last Minute

I don't fully blame you,
 Caught up in your mess.
 I bet your head wasn't really there.
 So what's your final thought?
 What was running through your head?
 After one, you should've known.
 Now your destiny has taking faith.
 I see no fear in your face.

Is it because inside, you're fully empty space?

-Byron

From The Beat: Is Donald Beardsley the person you're addressing these questions to, Byron? Some of your questions are really thoughtful and interesting. What makes you think he is "full of empty space"? Do you think that is what you would feel?

Inside, I Can't Make Things Right

I don't know what to write, but I'm hella mad, because my girl is mad at me and I haven't gotten to see her in more than six months and I miss my baby. I just want her to know I love her and maybe I will get to see her on my home pass in about three months, but I got to go for now. Al rato.

-Blacky

From The Beat: One of the most difficult parts about being incarcerated is not being able to have much influence upon your situation in the outside world. If something goes wrong in your family or with your girlfriend, it can be hard for you to communicate with them and make things right. Can you write or

New Years Goin' Down

How y'all gonna make the economy better when people get shot and stabbed every day?

My patna just died in San Francisco on New Year's Eve. That ain't be makin' me a happy New Year. He got stabbed in the heart and last New Year's my boy got pointblank shot and he's dead. Next year it could be me if I ain't locked up!

-Bruno

From The Beat: It must be really scary and sad to watch your friends pass away on New Year's, Bruno. And, you're right, you could be next! Can you seriously figure out what caused your friends to die, what, if anything, they could have done to help prevent their deaths? Were they in any way putting themselves out there to get hit? What will you do, when you're free again, to protect yourself and make sure that nothing you do will set you up to go down? You've had a rough couple of years. And, you're right, it's difficult to enhance a community economically, when it's dangerous to live and work there. Where would you start to help stop the violence?

I'd Talk To Scott Peterson

If I were able to talk to an almost dead person, I think it would be Scott Peterson. I would ask him questions, like how he felt after he killed Laci and how he feels about being on Death Row, and if he could change the past, would he? Or if he regrets anything.

I hate it today. I had a bad day at court and I hate it! Period!

-Melicañas

From The Beat: Interesting choice So far Scott Peterson has said that he's innocent, but maybe you could get him to tell you what really happened. Or, maybe he didn't kill his wife. What do you think?

Defenestration

This one time at a Bell in San Rafael, my homie pushed me through a window. It was hella funny. We were joking around fighting, and he threw a punch at me and I jumped back. Then he swept my feet and my back went through a window, but for some reason, I only got one minor injury.

-Arde

From The Beat: That's funny but scary, too. You are really lucky that you weren't seriously hurt. Do you think you would have been mad had you really gotten hurt?

How y'all gonna make the economy better when people get shot and stabbed every day?

Lung Cancer Kills Millions Each Day

I think if I could cure a disease, it would be lung cancer, because a lot of people are being diagnosed with it and it's killing millions each day.

-Melicañas

From The Beat: Do you have friends or anyone in your family who has lung cancer, Melicañas? If so, do they smoke cigarettes? If you could talk to people who smoke and inform them that if they don't stop they can harm themselves, even fatally, what would you say? Lung cancer, throat cancer, emphysema, all cigarette-smoking-related diseases, can cause terribly long and painful deaths.

Let's Cure HIV

The disease I would cure would be HIV. I would cure it because my father contracted it a few years ago. It was a shock to find out, because he's been with same woman for ten years, my step mom Kathy. They have my eight-year-old brother together, Tyler.

My dad's not gay, and he's never even shot up. He's just an alcoholic with a job and a place, but his woman Kathy also has such a bad alcohol problem, he wanted to find some one else to get it on with, and he had sex with some whore, and contracted HIV.

It scares me because Tyler will be nine this year and probably more sooner than later he's going to find out what it means when his mom and dad fight about dad having HIV. He's going to know what is really going on and what is going to happen.

-Jenny

From The Beat: This is as good an advertisement as we have seen for using condoms every time you engage in sex. We're sorry your father is going through it, and for what Tyler will be going through when the words start flying. Do you think there will be a cure for HIV soon?

Stop AIDS

I think that a good disease to cure would be AIDS because that disease is deadly. Very many teenagers encounter unsafe sex and drug use.

I think every one who has AIDS wishes there was a cure, and everyone who doesn't still fears the disease. So my words to everyone is safe sex and be drug free.

-Tiffany

From The Beat: It would be a great benefit to the whole world if we could cure AIDS. In some countries (in Africa), up to 25% of the population (one out of four) is infected with the deadly virus! Why do you think teenagers still engage in such high-risk behavior as having unprotected sex or sharing needles, even when they know the possible consequences?

Hate And Pain

I don't know how I feel. Is it pure hate, or is it the pain that's hurting me so bad inside? When I was young living in this crazy world. When I was small feeling so cold and alone. When I had nowhere to hide, but at the same time I was too scared to talk. Oh, how I hate myself for that.

How can I get rid of all this hate and pain? Is it going to keep on eating me up inside? Do I have to keep on running from something that always overcomes?

Why does it keep on haunting me at night when the lights are off and I'm laying in my bed alone? I wish I could just make it all go away. Why do I have to live in this life hate and pain?

Lord Jesus, I'm begging you to take me with you. If you take me with you, nobody will cry! Just take me out of this living hell — or take him to hell where he belongs. Lord Jesus, forgive me for the things I wish upon that man, forgive me for hating him so much.

Forgive me, for in my mind he's going to end up real deep inside his grave, 'cause of the doings of my own hands. I'm begging you, Father, to take me away from all this hate and pain.

-Ms. Fantasy

From The Beat: Of course, one of the main reasons why young people get into drugs is to dampen all that hurt and pain you express so well in this piece. It only works for a minute, though, and then you're back to facing the real world. We don't know what this man did to you that you want him dead, but praying to God to take him (or you) seems to us disrespectful to the Man you're praying to. After all, did your Lord Jesus create you? If so, asking for that creation to end seems like asking an artist to destroy his art. We have no magic cure for pain (which we all experience in this life), but we know that ending your life prematurely violates the very essence of the God to whom you pray for deliverance. In the Bible, Jesus tells the doctors, "Physician, heal thyself! What do you think he meant?"

Stupidity

Hey, this is Taz from Walden House and I want to talk about Donald Beardslee. I am really upset because of what has happened to him.

If I was to see him, I would say, "Well, how are you feeling? Me, a little great, but I am kind of mad because you are getting killed for killing two women. At least they could've talked to you and kept you in prison for twenty years or less. But they should know that you have a disability. You should get that fixed.

"I wish I could help you, but you took the wrong path. Just for now I would like to say good-bye and hope that you go to heaven. Even though what you did was wrong. God will always love you for whatever you did. God bless you and take care."

-Taz

From The Beat: You have a good heart, Taz. Does it surprise you to know that the state of California kept Mr. Beardslee in prison for more than twenty years before putting him to death? Besides telling him these comforting words, is there anything you would have liked to ask him, anything he could have taught us?

The Real Me

I grew up knowing my dad was Jamaican and my mom was Chinese and Native American, but I just found out that she's just Chinese and white. My grandfather just lives on a reservation, and I guess I got mixed 411. I haven't seen him since I was seven. I guess that's why you shouldn't make assumptions.

-Morena

From The Beat: You're absolutely right about your conclusion. Those assumptions we all make can get us into trouble when they're wrong. Does it make you feel any differently about yourself learning that you are not Native American, but that you are white (at least in part)? How?

Killing Us Slowly

If I could cure any diseases, it would be violence, anemia, and lung cancer. Violence because to me violence is ignorance; anemia because I'm anemic and it could be a fatal disease; and lung cancer because it killed my great granny.

-Morena

From The Beat: If you could cure ignorance, just think of how many other "conditions" (like racism, homophobia, and self-imposed limitations on what we can accomplish) that would disappear! If you had to choose just one of these "diseases" to cure, which would it be?

To All My Sisters

Hey, what it do? This piece us dedicated to my home girl up in the hall.

Hey girl, I'm gone but that don't mean you can give up though. Remember who yo' girl (LuLu) and what she about. You remember when we were in Reading Lab, and I was like, "I don't trust nobody." You said that you trust me 'cause I never said none of your business.

Remember what you about. Just 'cause yo' mama don't come see you. You know it don't mean she don't love you. You know, girl, that my house is yo' house.

You can't give up 'cause I told you that you're going to graduate high school, no matter if they send you to county. You the boss fo' sho. Girl, you a human being. You're not a bad person 'cause you up in there. I'm on your side to the fullest. You's a soldier Remember that. Take care, much love. I'll be thinking of y'all

-Chula

From The Beat: Even though you dedicated this to one special girl, we want The Beat to speak to many people, so we dedicate it to all the girls in your friend's situation. The excellent words and advice you have for her apply to many, many others, and we hope all your home girls take your advice to heart. Of course, when you tell someone they're a soldier, we want to know what they are soldiering for, because we've known soldiers who do dirt, and soldiers who do good. Which are you?

Conversation With A Condemned Prisoner

Yeah, I would ask him/her how they are feeling and what they were thinking when they killed the people, and why.

-Jenny

From The Beat: Do you think you could learn anything from the answers you'd get? Do you think those we condemn to death have anything to teach us, anything to say?

Stop Selling Dope

Hey, what's up? This is Taz from Walden House. If I was to have my own company it would be for people that are selling dope, so they could sell something else rather than selling that. We would sell CDs or other positive things rather than selling dope. That is a negative thing, so why don't we sell a positive thing.

I would buy it and you sell it, and you can keep the money and it could help you out. I would like to give you a positive place to stay rather than a dope house. It could help you in your recovery and help you succeed. So who like to join me? Thank you.

-Taz

From The Beat: This is a good idea, Taz, but how could you get those dope dealers to switch to selling CDs? They could do that now, couldn't they, but they still choose to slang. Anyway, we like your idea. As long as you have this idea in your mind, it can develop and mature into a true alternative to get youngsters to see that there are other ways to stack your chips without putting your freedom at risk.

Why

Why am I so stuck? I know I am not the one. All my patnas tell me I need to leave his ass alone. But I'm stuck. I don't wanna let go. I feel like I need him.

I've been away for seven months, and I still have love for him. I know what's up and I hate myself for being on him like that, but I got to do what I got to do.

He is the only one for me. I hate messin' with youngstas. I usually manipulate youngins, so when I met this one, he lightweight manipulated me. It's like I fell in love. I feel like I'm in Paradise with him. All my worries go away. Why do I feel like this? Why? Why? Why?

-Suga Free

From The Beat: We are old enough to have experienced both the surging thrill of love — especially first love — and the devastating pain that love also brings. We wish we could give you advice about love, but only you can decide whether holding on will help or hurt you. What we can say is that when relationships fall apart and it feels like the end of the world, it isn't. That next love you never imagined could be just around the corner.

How Do You Feel?

I would ask the person who is about to be executed how they feel and what they're doing? I would ask why they killed the person. (Even if someone were crazy, they still know what's really going on.)

It would suck to be in that person's shoes because then they ask you what do you want for your last meal. I just couldn't imagine.

-Lia

From The Beat: Why do you think that crazy people still know what's really going on. We know some people who are so crazy, they really don't have a clue what's going on. Don't you think it's crazy that they ask the man what special meal he wants — just before they kill him? Do you think the state should have the power to put its citizens to death?

Girl, you a human being. You're not a bad person 'cause you up in there.

LJ With great honor we have our young friend LJ back in the pages of The Beat. Not long ago, LJ was a prime time writer out of the 150 Crew. He dropped primetime POW pieces from unit 4 and unit A. Today he writes us as focused as ever from a Boys Republic in Chino Hills, California. We really like his latest submissions, particularly his tribute piece to our old friend E-Money, who actually responds on the following page. With that said, enjoy the ever inspiring and thoughtful LJ.

Finally

What's up Beat? I'm at Boys Republic right now. I got here in December. This place is okay so far. There's more freedom in here and it's better than the hall. I hope they give me a home pass soon.

I'm going to keep writing to The Beat. Can you send me Beats to my group home here. Send me a Beat for the week. I want to receive Beats weekly. So if you can send me some as soon as possible I will be highly thankful.

I'm not going to look at this as a downfall, but something that has helped me find myself.

Why?

Why did I choose this life?

I almost died at the hands of a knife.

Why did I rob that person?

It was only myself that I was hurting.

Why did I run the streets all night?

I always wanted to do wrong and not right.

Why did I not listen?

It's like I had unlimited ammo, but all I'm doing is missing.

Why did I take the wrong route?

Why aren't things what they seem?

I need to get on the right path and follow my dream.

Why are these people so fake?

I really need to think about the choices I decide to make.

Why did I fight a lot?

I did things before, why didn't I get caught?

Why didn't I think before I act?

I saw people with money and I wanted a stack.

Why did I have to be a thug?

Out of all my anger, I never turned to drugs.

Why did I always skip class?

Wish I could start over, but it's all in the past.

Why did I get caught up in the game

Tryna start all over, but it just ain't the same.

I guess because I was stubborn and didn't think about anybody. I only thought about myself and what I wanted. It's not all about me. There's other people in this world and this world doesn't revolve around me. I've lost my selfish ways and learned to help others when they need help.

E-Money's Words Touch

Your words really touch me. I love reading your Beats because they make me realize a lot of things.

I think about the thought of being dead. The thought of never breathing again. I think about how much pain I've caused to my family and friends. I think about my future and what I want to become.

You are a very powerful speaker and your words inspires me a lot. Your words are very deep and you speak the truth about everything you say.

Every time I read your piece, it seems like I can relate to what your saying. I can't relate because I haven't been in your shoes. I haven't done 7 1/2 years in prison. I haven't been through all of the torment you've been through.

By reading your words, it feels like I'm there. You describe everything in great detail.

I really want to say that I'm changing my life around for the better and your words are really encouraging.

I just want to change my life before it's too late. I don't want to be looking at 25 to life in prison. Just being in this group home stresses me out a lot, because I know if I were to mess up, I would be looking at 3 years in CYA. I just want to get out of the system for good and never return.

I hope to some day meet you and I'm going to try to work for The Beat when I get out of here. I love to help other people out and give advice, so people won't make some of the mistakes I did.

I love my freedom and I know everybody does too. Most of us just take our freedom for granted. I just don't want to see anybody fall into this trap that's set. I don't want to see anybody get put behind bars for life over something that wasn't worth it. Nothing in this world is worth your freedom.

This group home isn't as bad as jail, but you still have rules to obey. You can't do what you want. I just want to do my 9-12 months so that I can go home and live my life. I want to get a job and go to college. I have a lot of talent, it's up to me to use it.

Even if I was in jail for life, being alive is still something to be grateful for. You can pass on knowledge to other people and advise them not to make the same mistakes you did.

Most people don't think until it's too late. That's when they realize they should've done things differently. A lot of people don't listen to advice until they go to jail, they have to find out the hard way.

I was one of those people. I didn't listen and I ended up in juvenile hall begging the judge for one more chance. I just knew the judge was going to say 3 years in YA, but sure enough I got a another chance.

I'm learning from my mistakes and slowly but surely becoming a better person. I'm just living my life day by day and just hoping for the best.

I pray that everybody just think about their life and what it is that they want to make of it.

I pray that you, E-Money, stay safe on the outs and that you stay strong in mind, body and soul.

I'm never going to give up on myself, no matter what happens. I'm going to strive for better days to come. I'm not going to back track, but move forward. I'm not going to look at this as a downfall, but something that has helped me find myself. Anything could've happened the night of the crime, but thank the Lord for watching over me. I know that He's guiding me in the right direction and all my faith is in Him.

So maybe if you're working at The Beat by next year, I will be able to meet you, and work with you. I just want to say stay up to everybody and to David, thanks for your advice. Thanks for putting my pieces in The Beat and sending me Beats up here. I will continue to write and encourage others to write.

Ready to go badly

I'm tired of this place. There's a lot of rules we have to obey and it's boring here. The staff try so hard to get people in trouble, but they don't try hard to help people out when we're having problems. These staff expect everybody to change over night. Well that's what it seems like. They expect people to change but don't give us time to change. Some staff expect people to be perfect. They act like they're better than us, because we're in here.

They should treat people equally no matter what situation they're in. We are all human and we want to be treated like human. We just want to be shown some respect too.

They say they are here to help us, but I don't see it. The only help I been getting is from myself or other peers. I'm just trying to stay strong so I can get out of here and turn my life around.

This is that one opportunity I've been asking for, and now it's me who has to do what's right. I have to learn from my mistakes so I can better myself. I'm preparing for the real world and just living my life day by day. I have to grow up and learn how to handle myself better than I am. I have to learn how to overcome temptation and other barriers that get into my way. I have to be the bigger man and learn how to walk away. I'm learning as I get older and I want to use this knowledge for something productive. I want to be somebody in this world. I want to show people like me, that they can succeed.

LJ (CONT.)

Team Player

I love playing basketball. That is my favorite sport and my favorite thing to do. I can play from sun up to sun down.

I am a team player. I never hog the ball, like some people. I pass it to everybody and not just the best player all the time. I grab rebounds and I hustle a lot. I'm good on offense and defense.

Sometimes I play bad and some days I almost never miss a shot. I like my form. People always tell me that my shot is ugly, but I just say, "at least I make my shots." I make most of my shots for somebody to tell me that my shot is ugly.

When I play, I don't talk trash like a lot of people do. I just play basketball and I try to win. I don't always win, but I know that I played my heart out.

I'm not a poor sport. I don't get mad when I lose. I congratulate the winners and I tell them that was a good game. I don't hate on other people, like a lot of people that play basketball. I'm not perfect and I don't expect anybody on my team to be.

I welcome you to stand on the front lines in this war for world peace

E-Money Responds To LJ

It must be God's calling for me to run across such an intelligent mind as yours and for you to run across a man that is crying on the inside to see a change in such a corrupted society where one can only guess what tomorrow will bring.

As I read this letter (from LJ) I can't help but to see how much of me is within you. I've seen you somewhere, but yet I haven't. You are that boy that was within me that has disappeared from the coldness of my once prison cell in which his tears of pain had been frozen in time and now I only see him in my dreams, somewhere out there in the world continuing his journey in the constant search for world peace.

You are like wood to this fire of freedom, your words got us all warm on the inside. Your knowledge got us desperate for it's continual heart felt education and your wisdom is that of a man that is ahead of your time. You are a soldier of God learning what it means to fight for a freedom that is constantly under attack by attitudes, opinions, theories, racism, etc. You are special my friend.

As I read your letter one word kept on standing out, when it comes to the characteristics you possess. That word is "consideration" my friend. It is impossible to attend to a people if you don't possess this trait. You aren't only considerate for yourself being, but also those you love and those you want to help. You are able to escape your mind to the dark caves of the future, where to seek for wisdom is like seeking for a needle in a haystack. You are now seeing things other people aren't seeing. You are now experiencing reality after being a hostage of fantasy for so long. Your third eye has finally woke from his casket of death.

Even though you can't relate to me in doing prison time, you still are patient and inquisitive when it comes to me telling you my story. You are able to imagine what

E-MONEY With great privilege, our colleague and friend E-Money is back in the pages of The Beat Without. Our old friend was inspired to write the following by our new friend, the ever thoughtful, LJ out of 150. It's so great to have E-Money in our office everyday. He's not just a wonderful writer, but he is a stand-up team player, helping with typing, editing, going to workshops and speaking in the community. What more can you ask from this talented young man.

being in prison must feel like, simply by reading and seeing through my words to the cold reality that they depict. We simply don't live long enough for us to learn it all on our own.

I don't know what the future may possibly bring but if you left it up to me I intend to be right here at this computer in a constant search for world peace when you finally walk through these doors, of a place called The Beat Within. Patience will be for sure bring you to that beautiful day where the birds will be singing sweet tunes of freedom and the sun will be giving its warming smile if you were to just hang in there.

Before I leave I just wanted to say thank you (LC) for giving me that extra gasoline to keep my heart burning for another day and another chance to participate in the brutal fight for this happiness we know as world peace. You represent progress when it's hard for me to see my effectiveness. You represent hope in times when it seems hopeless. You represent that "one" in my saying, "as long as I touch one, I know I have touched a nation."

Living life trying to save a troubled youth isn't an easy task. Fighting against a system designed to program and control the vulnerable minds of the people of society is like trying to hold the world up with your head, hoping you don't receive a cramp in your neck from all the pressure that's being endured. I welcome you to stand on the front lines in this war for world peace and tell me, can you yet see the hatred in the eyes of a devil that's wishing to see me and you deceased?

YOUNG BURN ONEWe welcome
Young Burn

One to our precious pages of The Beat Within. This new writer has some thoughtful words to share with us readers and we are thankful for that. We do not know too much about this writer, except what follows, which is writings from two recent letters. Young Burn One writes us from the Ad. Seg. (Administrative Segregation) unit in New Folsom Prison in Represa, CA

Complications of Mind

Oceans I've wept and lonely miles I've walked...
My eyes ache, and my legs are tired.
But still, I continue my journey...
I often wonder why, when I feel too weak to press on
I still desire the need to face life
To keep my head up and to be strong.
To make a change from what I know
Is wrong into a right.
If I refuse to turn my negative into a positive then
My struggle had no reason...
And wouldn't it be easy to let go?
Allowing life's pain to slowly wash me away.
The fight is mine to battle, and mine to lose.
But I can't give up on myself
Gotta believe I'm winning
Even when I lose
And though when my bones are
Aching, and my body can sleep away my pain.
I wake up to the same path I left off to rest
Only to journey again...

Dear Beat

Hey what's it like today? Once again it is I, Burn, sending mines to y'all whom are reading these pages. Just thought I'd send a few what nots and something somethings 'cause see it's Friday, I ain't got a job and I ain't got shhh to do! I am currently in Folsom Ad.-Seg. (hole) so all I got is time to read and write...

I have had a chance to reread some of the letters and poetry over a lil' in the recent issue I have received, and I am glad to see the majority of the youth writers seem to be making a change to better themselves. I hope and wish them all the best no matter their intentions. My love to them all, and my big props to The Beat staff for your effort in helping all in a positive matter. You lead the way to all by showing "us" (readers-writers) a better path. It's up to us to continue that journey. Thank you.

Now I am submitting two pieces. One is called "Complications of Mind," this is going to my carnal Vince. He is going through a difficult point in his life and he feels all has given up on him. I want him to know all is not lost until he gives up on himself, so fight on, and also that I love him.

My second piece in response to a "Wonderful Soul!" I happen to read a piece in The Beat standouts 9.41 and felt this person's point of view and felt it deserved a lil' recognition. I'm sure by its wording this person will see that their words were not only read but felt and I hope that person can smile bright throughout their days...

Alrighty then I'm spent! For now... I'll hit you up in a few... My best to you all... Peace out.

I can't give up on myself**5 Dollars of Forgiveness**

The other day I had fifty dollars in my wallet on my bed...
Today I opened up my wallet to find just 45 instead...
Damn 5 dollars short, I know I haven't spent it yet...
Plus I know it's missing 'cause my girl wrote Karma on it...

Could it be my little sis, Frances, naw, she's not a thief
it makes no sense...
My bro, Mario's been at camp all week, it's got to be my bro Vince...
If money is what he needed, he could've asked I'd have said ok...
But now his greedy desires has funk'd up my whole day...

In my frustration my mother yells to me
"Mijo drive me to the store real quick to pick up a few things..."
It'll only take a minute she makes it seem...
So happily I oblige, come on it's free time with moms...
(smile)
I don't know about all y'all but to me she's the bomb...
Driving on our way, playfully remarking que I'm getting fat...
Yet all I could think was, did Vince really do that...

Up in the store standing in the longest line so it seems...
Mad 'cause there is 16 items in our cart, but express lane says only 15...

Finally it's out turn, I bag as mom pays...

Happily in the car back home on our way...
As I pull up in the drive way my bro Vince is finally home,
talking on his 2 way laughing into the phone...
I bring the bags in, and ask if I can help out with dinner today...
She loving say "no thanks mijo," with that I'm on my way...
"Michael wait!" I heard her say...
"Here's 5 dollars I borrowed from your wallet just the other day..."
She pulls it from the change she got at the grocery store...
With that I felt hella bad right down to the core...

I felt angry at myself and sadness towards my bro Vince...
I reach for the bill, I'm shocked, my body goes tense...
Staring at this cursed bill I call my bro into the house...
Ashamed I am for not trusting him I feel lower than a mouse...

Yeah what's up "big bro," as I hand him this 5 dollar bill...
I blamed you in my heart for stealing this when I should have kept it real...
"Thanks" he said, and gave me, "I probably would have blamed me too (look)..."
Mario's away, and Frances ain't going to steal from you...
Walking away I smile a new love found for my bro I now have...
And as I enter the other room I hear "Who's Karma" and I can't help but to laugh...

Beauty On The Inside

I don't ignore you 'cause your body ain't perfect...
Actually, I look right past you, 'cause my mind is ignorant...

You're not loved, just under appreciated
And I'm sorry for your luck...

But if I had a better appreciation of how you felt as I
do now,

Than it's your hand that I would have took...
And you argue a perfect point que gorditas are human too...

You laugh, you cry, you hurt and through it
All you try to be the perfect you...

And now that I think of it, I may have over looked
you in the streets, the school, or the store.
In fact I know I overlooked you for my lust wanted
something in a size four.

So to all those who've sat and wondered
"What does she got?" or "Why can't I get that guy?"
Forget 'em, your mind and intelligence has shown
thru your words,
and made you the beautifullest in my eyes!

**I myself would like to thank all
those in 150 Crew for further
expanding their minds through
words, and especially respect
those who reverse their negative
energy into a positive expression
of words that touch all who read.**

Spitting Image...

Who am I,
Who might you be to ask...
Questions left unanswered

Are better ask than ignoring 'em instead
So might I go on forever knowing who I am not?
Like a determined scholar, I need to know, see the
meaning of me...

I know where I came from, but do not nowhere I lost that
part of me...

You know the answer!!!

Won't you help in my time of need,
Open up your mind to mines, your heart
For we bleed of the same tree...

I need your guidance, 'cause your
Soul can see much clearer than mine...

You are the same, you and I,
But your mind won't let us be...
Frustration 'cause when you seek you,
It leads straight to me.

Who are you to hate me,
Why do I even care...

I should walk away right now
But I know you'll still be there
You despise me I can see it you're here
'Cause of judgments that I made...

Hey you knew right from wrong
Yet didn't help to steer your self straight
Though absence of mind separate out bodies.
I still see you in the mirror,
Seeing me

YOUNG BURN ONE (CONT.)**The Beat Within**

Bug ups to you and your staff for comprising
and putting together a program that is reaching
out to both youth and seniors through the
expression of life through poems and letters. I
thoroughly enjoy the total Beat front to back.

I myself would like to thank all those in 150
Crew for further expanding their minds through
words, and especially respect those who reverse
their negative energy into a positive expression of
words that touch all who read.

I myself got all day! In body, but mind has
endless freedom. I have been down for 11 years, and
I'm only 28, so yeah to those currently just starting
out (that's all you in the halls, and CYA) take a
moment to check yourselves. 'Cause even though
you can touch myself and I'm sure thousands of
other souls with your wording of compassions so
sweet, it's still bitter compared to how much better
it would taste in the streets.

And for all you who don't learn, trip, I at least
put the mind food out there for you to eat. Closed
minds don't get fed. So eat folks, that's real talk.

And finally but not last to The Beat Within
staff, thanks for opening another library for my
mind. I hope to continue receiving this publication
and will equally do my share off the mind to send
in. Until next time, to all in mind, body, and soul,
keep reaching for the sky 'cause we as stars exceed
without limits... With peace and love to all!

Ahead of Yourself

There was a lil Indian boy 9 or maybe 10,
Who battled with the shadow of the trees in which
he played...

He would tell all that when he grew, he would be
the greatest warrior known to man...

Not fear through life, nor hate would stop him
from being the ferocious throughout the land...
While playing one day a straw arrow hit him, and so
ended his dream of a legacy...

Which leads to my point...
That castles made of sand melt away eventually.

Dedicated to the young who die trying to be
something tomorrow, that their not today...

**I need your
guidance,
'cause your
Soul can see much
clearer than mine...**

SEED Absent from our pages for a minute, Seed (Corey Conyers) is back with a bang! As with much of his poetry, there are references which we cannot understand, and we apologize to seed for changing some of his spelling. (We replaced "I" for "Eye" for example). But what we do understand is that this young man who writes us from the Sussex correctional institution in Georgetown, Delaware, combines remorse — a sense of sorrow and regret for the injuries he is responsible for — with the promise hope for a more positive future, and the recognition that we are all bound together by our need for love.

Pieces That Exist

Damn, look at what I've done,
I know I messed up big time,
I should've realized it long ago,
But now you've opened my eyes,
And after all this and all that,
it pains to see you drop 'tears of blood' ma,
And it's all my fault,
I'll be the man I'm supposed to be,
I accept the responsibility that belongs to me,
I'm just hoping it's not too late,
I know you were angry,
but I never thought that anger would turn into such
hate,
I had no idea my hand had pushed that bitter knife
so deep,
puncturing your beautiful heart,
just shattering the most vital organ to particles of
dust,
Now you wanta take that same knife and stab me
and it's all because I destroyed your love, my love,
our love that we shared,
the most precious privilege being that natural
feeling,
that feeling not even purple haze mixed with ty
could mess with,
And it's crazy
I didn't know the best thing in my life until
you were fading away,
I was oblivious, just so blind,
Why didn't you talk to me?
Tell me what was oozing inside?
Why you always cried,
leaking that venom from your soft eyes?
Feelings? Emotions? These are the pieces of a
man... The pieces I don't show,
The pieces... I barely even know
Shhh, sometimes they hide from me,
Let alone my other half,
But they exist,
It's just hard to express,
hard to explain my unforgivable betrayal,
My insulting disrespect,
My advocacy of infidelity,
There's no reason for such unjustifiable treason,
I know you're tired of hearing this but I truly
apologize
This time, please forgive me
I can treat you like a true princess,
Can we just start over, start a better life...
Marry me, be my wife, we can start a family...
Just let me show you I'm serious,
That I can be your 'Real Man'
I need you... bad!...
I can't live without you, my other half...

**Now I know how you felt,
Weeks to months out of town
And you were home crying for
me, missing me,**

Dear Beat Within

Peace. What's the science? Hopefully all is at its best.

I gave Mumin "Da Lost Son," the issue you sent to me to give to him. He went crazy when he saw his bombs dropped in The Beat Without pages. He should be flying something soon.

As for self, I'm making moves, positive moves for what's next to come for me after this here (prison).

Anyway I got some more napalm here for my peoples holdin' it down for The Beat dynasty. Thank you, by the way. On the real you help me keep pushing this pen. I drew up four pieces. Now, one of them I was inspired by the beautiful minded Ampelia. (Pardon my ignorance if I spelled her name wrong) "Fly Girl."

Shorty's mad sharp. She kind of reminds me of the young wisdom body, Baby Girl, from Napa, that used to write. Anyway, she dropped this one joint that really got me, "Tears Of Blood." When I first did the knowledge to that, I ran to my son and was like "Yo, this is how the young Mami's feeling right now. I got to reflect." "So I reflected with "Pieces That Exist."

Not to generalize from Ampelia's unfortunate experiences, but I'm sure there's many women out there who has been hurt the way she has, and she basically spoke for them all.

Until out next build, it's your world. I exist as I entered... that is in peace.

Remembering Your Tears

Sitting here thinking back,
Nothing out the ordinary,
Just wanta be close to you, watch you, hold you, Caress
you a little,
Talk to you, ask you how your day went,
Elaborate on your feelings,
The thought of your presence is killing me ma,
Peeling away at my heart,
And sitting in this hell cell don't help.
Putting an extra grasp on myself,
This is the pressure of me missing you,
Remembering the delicate kisses you would plant on my
temple,
Your touches the way you giggle, the way you moan
when I eye rub you a certain way,
Now I know how you felt,
Weeks to months out of town
And you were home crying for me, missing me,
Your "other half" as you called me,
The selfish soul that would stay up late nights
Hovering over your resting body as it slept,
Listening to the sexy noises you made,
So insecure, I always wondered if I was
The concentrated figure of those dreams,
I apologizes for all I missed out on,
It was so much I should've done,
I should've been there to catch you,
I should've been there to catch those burning tears
Streaming down your cheeks and off your chin,
I should've been there when you lost my son,
Damn! I've should've listened when you said leave my
gun,
My passion, my pain,
All the things I want,
All the things I need,
You, this game,
You took my heart, my strength,
I'm lifeless,
You beat my soul to death with a thorned stick,
I guess I deserve such punishment...

Mathematics Is What's Happenin'

I bust ear drums, blowin' my trumpet of triumph to life's
tunes,
Ridin' clouds of victory over great big desert sand dunes,
The magnificent, untarnished, Golden skin unbreakable,
Motivated by the sweet voice of Amel Larrieux,
Devil's eye be shakin' 'em, sliding down my Samurai blade in
twos,
Slayin' 'em like Minamoto no Yoshitsune,
They hollerin', "Seed" in agony, dyin', cryin',
'cause they can't stand to bear this type of pain,
Not a rose but a giant redwood tree that grew from the
concrete jungles of the coast the Sun rises on,
Peakin' over the edges of the earth, reachin' out left until I
set, burnin' like roach clips,
I feed you bits of pieces of glimpses,
keepin' you guessin', I want you to questioned me,
Testin' me,
I can see it in ya eyes, can hear it in ya voice,
You wanta bite deep down in my heart,
but it's tearing you apart,
Piercin' holes in ya brain with my caliber of thought
So celestial, extra terrestrial, a super nova that holds you
captive,
wanting to absorb more of this solar passion
I traveled from various galaxies,
Build with scholars from mad colleges to educated "street
criminals"
and traded math with Dominican wisdom bodies
passin' by bodegas, wearin' thick black braids flowin' down
their backs
Feelin' Prince Latif's profile,
Infatuated with my charmin' smile,
Shinin' so bright, I left em' sunkissed
But nah, I ain't on no pretty shhh,
I've learned that life's more than platinum chain rims, and
big rose gold rings,
For to rule your own destiny and reign supreme,
Your mental state must be set at that of a king's and Master
Equality
It's like the reality of these mysterious pictures being drawn
up
It was written throughout world history,
From my mind capacity to the Indus Valley's
Ancient cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, Mathematics is
what's happenin',
I'm accumulating atoms,
crackin' skulls of these silly rabbit-ass savages, Antagonist
comin' at me,
But The Beat dynasty crushes them,
Publishing my poetry, intimately fused,
Like T10 2, and for those who don't know,
That's Titanium bullets born from the barrel of my tongue,
Young'n's, pay attention to the seasons,
The change is the conclusion I'm hallucinating from,
A sole survivor
Yet Seed's finally cryin',
Showin' compassion, over a world so connivin',
Wired and amped over nothin',
These people kill me, frontin', fakin' jacks,
Something in the 'hood happens in the suburbs
The thugs clappin', trigger happy, spouse abuse, rapes, and
drugs,
But at the same time we all want love!

I ask myself,
"Who am I?"

SEED (CONT.)

That's Titanium bullets born from the barrel of my tongue

Secrets Thoughts Of The Destroyer

Here I am, lost in the endless nights,
Pouring my vast soul out into the streets,
Or should I say selling my soul out,
Making my pen bleed as she reluctantly helps
me express all of my crumbling dreams,
I used to stay reaching for the clouds,
But now
It's like my whole world's spinning out of
control,
Making gravity hold me down with more
pressure
And the closest I get to the stars is at the top
of my building in the projects,
Letting my thoughts swim through the sea of
lights from the city's skyline,
I realize my dreams are hopeless,
Because the city's veins keep pulling me back
down, Forcing me to eat that poison
My thoughts are mad flooded in cold blood,
As I unwillingly participate,
But in order to survive and prosper,
You must cooperate accordingly and follow
through,
Or get crushed by the masses
And this is tragic how the youth get trapped in
I was just like them when they first grabbed
me,
Molding me into a moral-less soldier, a killing
machine,
But I've always wondered if all the others were
aware like me,
Did they think like me?
Do they see what I see?
Sometimes I feel guilty 'cause these thoughts
seem disloyal,
I ask myself, "Who am I?"
Not that it really matters much
All that I've destroyed
This is my life, but why can't I accept it?
Something tells me it's more,
But how will I know exactly what it is I'm
looking for and will I find it?
I guess that's something I got to figure out on
my own too.
What about you?
The treasure's in the glaciers of ice,
Destruction's a Hell's Apostles paradise...

R. CABRERA

Veteran writer and reader of The Beat, R. Cabrera is back in our pages this week with some real tough love as he shares a part of his life and his struggles as a lifer. A seasoned writer who has been a part of the CDC for too long, reflects on a life of pain and sadness. We all hope that the following pieces will make you take a look at your life and the direction you are heading and realize there is a better road, than living in a cell in a state prison. R. Cabrera writes us from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA.

Tough Guys

If someone ever said that tough guys are in prison,
they told you a lie.
I know because I have been in prison for nearly a
quarter of a century.
I know because I was around some of the most
violent men in San Quentin and Folsom
two decades ago.
Today they and others are probably in Corcoran,
Pelican Bay, High Desert or other,
and yet there still isn't a tough guy in prison.
And I know
like I know you where you are,
I was,
I have seen,
tasted,
and felt street and prison gang violence given and
taken.
Just for one moment
I never spotted a tough guy, tough guys are free.
Tough guys make tough decisions,
take tough action,
not to be in a lot or,
in the grave or the cell.
Tough guys know how to say "no,"
but realize their response may have terrible
repercussions upon them,
tough guys have courage to say and do the
right thing
when fate comes knocking
but there are no tough guys in prison

Now is The Time

Can't trust no one
But the walls here
They ain't your friends
They exist to separate you from
True friends and family
They exist for what you did or
Did not do
Ain't no excuse
Can't rationalize or justify
Time to look at the man in the mirror
It isn't the "informant" "rat" "snitch"
Or "victim" that created a bond of trust
Between you and these walls
It was on that fateful day you made demise your bed
to sleep in
You did it and no matter how much we wish
We can't change the past
We can change the direction of the future
Here and now
Now is the time for change
Now means time for responsibility
Forget about the rest
And think about the best - you
Which way you going now
You can be more a man today than
Yesterday by making the right decision
Progress will commence only with you
And then you will make these walls disappear
One at a time

Me

I use to feel sorry for myself with this long stretch
below my belt.
I use to think how I got into the wreck ,
27 - to Life,
for a drive by.
I blamed everyone I could,
the judge,
cops,
prosecutor,
friends,
family,
and anyone I could
-but myself.
I use to say I was a product of my environment.
I came from a broken home.
I didn't get enough love and attention.
It was the TV or music
I listened to.
It was society's fault.
When I first heard on TV or about HADD (Hyper
Attention Deficit Disorder),
you got it, I said,
"I had it!"
Because my father didn't live with us
-I said it was his fault.
Then one day I thought whose fault is it that
Jerry is dead?
Who is it that took his opportunity at making a
family
or spending time with his mother and family?
Who was it that pulled the trigger and in doing so
ceased his dreams,
goals, life, and so much more?
Why was my mother crying?
Who broke her heart?
The response came quick,
me!
No one to blame from that day on.
I felt bad for his family,
my family,
and most of all for Jerry.
I understand now that there is only the truth and
in it I regret most of all
- the way I use to be.
Now, I must build and fix what I did.

Regrets and Regrets

I peek through the keyhole of yesterday's
laundry
I see a bed of sour rose pedals
Laying there
Just one regret after the other
When will I wise up, the mind asks,
when will you
It's a shame
Shame I never picked up a page till I hit the
cage
and it became my inferno between heaven and
earth
Following the puppeteer's beat and not my own I
regret
Now there's just a bunch of us wannabees and
who were's full of regret
in mind hearts and souls
Ain't no tough guys here
Only once upon a timers, doing time, and
looking through the same keyhole of
yesterday's regrets laying on a bed full of sour
rose pedals

Crack Js Wack

When a shadow was my enemy
 And my crack pipe was my friend
 Life wasn't very precious
 I wished that it would end
 But now that I'm away from that
 And my body's trying to mend
 I want to do something positive
 And not for dividends
 See, the devil robbed me blind
 But up till now I couldn't see
 I burnt the candle from both ends
 And that burning candle was me
 I've shortened my life
 And it's all because of crack
 Now I get bad chest pains

I'll probably die of heart attack
 So I'm picking up my pen
 And I'm trying to let you know
 Every time you hit some crack
 Your heart almost explodes
 That stretches out the muscles
 From the constant overload
 And just like a rubber band
 A muscle can only take so much
 If I had it to do it all over again
 I'd say please pass that Dutch
 The path I chose ain't pretty
 And it troubles me no end
 How on earth could I consider
 A glass crack pipe my best friend?

SIERSKI

We seldom read a piece calling for making alcohol illegal, even though many of you write about the devastating effects it can have on your lives. (The history of Prohibition makes us wary of leaving a medical/social problem in the hands of the criminal justice system.) On the same hand, Joe Sierski has his own history to draw from, as he does so passionately in these anti crack, anti drug exhortations! (We won't discuss the history he drew from in the hilarious but naughty poem, "Break Bread.") Joe writes from Florida State Prison.

Illegalize It

When alcohol was illegal
 The world was a better place
 'Cause it removes all inhibitions
 And takes away feelings of disgrace
 So you'll do things you wouldn't do
 If you weren't in that frame of mind
 And once you've gone an' done it
 It's too late, you can't rewind
 So people crash their cars
 And husbands beat their wives
 And some will ultimately ruin
 Their whole entire life
 Rotten fruits and vegetables
 Make a poison that might taste good
 But it causes way too much drama throughout each
 and every 'hood
 If we respect our elders
 Exactly as we should
 Then we should illegalize alcohol
 'Cause the idea was certainly good

Dear Beat

I wrote a poem today while in the midst of some chest pains, which have become a constant reminder to me of the extent of harm I've done myself while living without a care. Sometimes I wonder will I make it to see 2012 my max out is 1/11/12 but I should at least earn a date mid 2011 hopefully? God only knows if I'll even see that alive.

See, no one ever tells you about the physical damage crack cocaine does to the body. All they talk about is "this is your brain on drugs," which has become nothing but a big fat joke to the youth. In fact, not long after that infamous commercial, the term "fried" surfaced. To be fried was to us a good thing, too. It's sad but true.

Sure, I could sit here and make up dozens of gangster rhymes about toting gats and poppin' caps, but it's pointless to me, 'cause even if I did impress anyone with my ability to rhyme in verse, what would I accomplish? It's like I said when I ended that one poem, "I would write a million rhymes to you about a million different things, but none would mean more to me than what I could do if I could just convince you not to drink the poisonous brew."

See, I didn't pick up my pen to spread hate, animosity, or even envy. I did it to spread the truth or a positive message to the youth your publication reaches. I hope that even just one kid will read anything I've written and say, "Damn, that was some real shhh," and maybe even decide not to drink or smoke crack.

I hope you approve of the overall message that crack is wack, 'cause it is wack — about as wack as wack can be!

Break Bread

Females beware
 I've come to ensnare
 your hearts and emotions with words
 An' you best believe that I know indeed
 the difference between a noun and a verb
 So don't be perturbed or even disturbed
 by the pathetic size of my bone
 'cause it's not the size of the ship
 but the motion of the ocean
 that'll stop you from sailing home
 I've got what it takes
 To make the earth shake
 'cause I know all you females love poems
 Even those well written by a man who's smitten
 Who has a wiener the size of a gnome's
 So if you look fly as you walk by
 I brush off my upper lip please don't frown
 'cause all that I'm doing is clearing a space
 where I'd like for you to sit down
 Now I've composed these lines
 with a purpose in mind
 to make you all wear a smile not a frown
 So remember that was me
 and when I'm set free
 pull all your panties down!

Your Life Js**In Your Hands**

Your life is in your hands
 So don't believe in fate
 'Cause your life is what you make of it
 So don't player hate
 'Cause that's what messed up Lucifer
 So God had to set him straight
 So don't hang your head down low
 About others doing good
 Let it be an inspiration to you like it
 should
 Use that as the means
 to pull yourself up high
 The sky is the limit
 so reach higher with every try
 Never give up trying
 or else you'll never win
 The future is but a work in program
 Today's where it begins
 You cannot change the past
 But you can make a decision today
 That will affect the path you travel on
 Until your dying day
 So when you make your decision
 Please think it through real well
 'Cause the path of least resistance
 Will most likely lead to hell
 Life's not always easy
 But I'm sure you already know
 Your life is in your hands
 It's up to you where it shall go
 This is just the message
 An' although it was written by me
 I do believe its contents
 To be passed down from the great big "G"!
 Much love

SILENT SAM Sam Capers has been silent for a while, but he returns to our pages with these powerful contributions. Falling into depression is easy to do in jail, so we are grateful that he can motivate himself by realizing that others might learn from his experiences — and avoid them. Part One of his autobiography is eye-opening. We plan to hold him to his promise of putting it down in *The Beat*. Silent Sam writes us from the West Valley Detention Center in Los Angeles, CA.

Chronicles Of A Mad Man, Part One

"A Silent Sam Story"

(Dedicated to Amanda Barber)

As ironic as it seems, life has been a serious mess for me from the day I took my first breath. All the mistakes and wrong choices have led up to the point I am now at. So while you lay back and read this chapter of my vida, keep the word sobornado, "twisted" in your mind.

That's how things were for me. Oh sweet and, yes, twisted reality, why has thou forsaken me?

Horale pues! Let me introduce myself to all the gente out there. All races, religious and genders. My name is Samuel Lee Capers, also known as "Silent Sam." Mucho gusto! Some of you may remember me from the past issues. I sent in a couple of pieces venting my frustration.

I'm back now to put it down and do the best I can to reach out to all the gente and to share the wisdom Dios has bestowed upon my war-scarred heart. This article in its entirety is dedicated to Amanda "Mandy" Barber, a young girl who's doing teimpo at Valley State Prison for women in Chowchilla. "May Dios bless you, Mija."

I started down the dark road when I was real young. I had it good. Deaquellas! My grandparents raised me, and after a spell adopted me as their boy. As far as the material aspect of things, I had it all. If I asked for something, that's what I got without a question. My belly was always full and I had a warm bed. Even now, that truly gets to me. This is why.

You see, my familia was twisted. Love was shown through who gave the most expensive gifts. Yet underneath it all, there was way too much division.

Nobody in my familia got along, and though we had get-togethers, the hypocrisy was evident, everybody just sitting around hating on each other. That's sick, very sick. Don't get it twisted. I got some tios and tias who's cool as ice cream. But the majority of them, I kept them at arms distance. Clearly, I saw exactly how they got down. Sabes que that's why I pushed them away.

I've been asked on several occasions about my biological mother and father. Moms had me at a very young age. Along with my pops, they just started high school. Being my moms side is all Japanese, not to mention of royal blood line, she was shunned by everybody but my grandmother. Moms had it hard. Even now, I sit and shed tears thinking about the things she had to endure. Nine months of hell, insults, put downs, etc. Believe me, I felt them too. Up to this very day I do. Not to mention the pain and loneliness I feel now. That's a different story that we we'll get into a bit later.

As for my pops, I ain't seen or spoke to him in years. His side which are all Samoan, wanted me as their own. Sadly, it pretty much turned into a game of tug-of-war with both sides of my family. I had the unfortunate honor of being the rope. Not one of them had any kind of consideration for how I felt or what I wanted. To them I was just "there," like a piece of broken-down dusty old furniture. Nobody cared about my feelings, chale. My

pops finally threw in the towel, and mom's side won. I was their trophy.

Finally, my moms said, "I'm cool on all this drama." She bounced and started living the la vida loca. Her homies and drugs became a safe haven from all the insanity the family was dishing out.

That was about the time I began to look up to the gang life. All the while, I began growing angrier by the day. I learned to hate people and life in general. That wasn't good. The anger drove me over the edge. Moms was gone, pops had nada to say to me, and there I sat upon a mantle. Their trophy.

Christmas day, 1988, I can say was one of the most unforgettable days ever. As always we had one of them sick get-togethers. The house was all hooked up and festivities were on the way. Yet to me, the festivities wasn't for Christmas, it was for the birth of what took deep within my heart and soul, a burning so uncontrollable, it consumed my entire being. Its iron grip refused to let go.

An argument broke out. Like always, it was about me. I shook my head and went to the bedroom closing the door behind me. The all-so-familiar bitter tears which fell from my eyes was unbearable. My body shook with rage, sadness and frustration. I cried out to Dios, "Why did you allow me to be born? Why God? So I can be used as an emotional punching bag?"

What happened next was the last straw. It blew the lid off the pot of bitter emotions. My tia came into the room and said, "It's your fault that nobody gets along. Why don't you just leave and get out of our lives."

From that moment, I realized I wasn't in any way wanted in my family.

I got on...

That night, I walked the calles not knowing where I was to go. Nobody even noticed that I bounced. When I walked out of their lives, I snatched a couple of beers and was out the door. Alratos! With a good buzz going, the night got a lot prettier and my spirits lifted. Merry Christmas muthas!

The walk was a peaceful one. My ears rang and could feel the heat in my face as the alcohol took its effect. The sweet scent of burning cedar wood filled the air. It was hard not to chuckle at the way things really were. Not that it really mattered. It was just twisted thinking. With a rush, reality hit me square in the face. "Your on your own Sammy."

"I always have been." I argued with myself.

I walked for an hour and went into a Lucky supermarket — strait to the liquor department and boosted a bottle of vodka. Walking out, nobody saw me. I sat behind the library. Popped open the bottle, I downed half the fifth. Yeah, Merry Christmas. My eyes began to haze out. Smiling to myself I thought "I'm on my own. All fourteen years old of me..."

A few days later, I met a vato at a bus stop. In Wilmington. I never went back to where I wasn't wanted. I asked him for a cigarette and we started talking. What I liked about him was the fact that he was a gang member. So rather than going to the mall to boost for food money, I went to his house in Long Beach. His name was Shy Boy. At this spot I cleaned up and ate tortas de carnitas with Coronas to wash them down. His jefita was firme gente and his sister wanted to jump my bones.

You can say Shy Boy took time and schooled me on how to survive on the calles. I picked up quick on Spanish, learned what can get me killed and the best

continued on next page

ways on how to make fast and good feria. That day I lost my virginity to Shy Girl, Shy Boy's 17-year-old sister. With Dickies, Sweat Shirt and Chucks on my feet, I was on top of the world.

Still, that pulling at my heart was always throwing the pain of utter rejection in my face. It was something I had to learn to come to terms with. I hated the madness that sat upon my shoulders like a lead weight. The things that ran through my mind would've scared a common man to death. A monster was born. A vato who became one of the most feared in his world. His name was Silent Sam.

It was a July 4th, 1989. Shy Boy took me to his primo's spot in South Central Los Angeles for a lil' kick back and carne asada. No sooner did I step out the car, gun shots rang out from the next block over. Gang bangers jumping fences and running all over. A mother walks by with her infant in a stroller and crack pipe in her hand. I thought to myself, "Where the hell am I at?" I guess Shy Boy read my mind and said "Welcome to the concrete Vietnam!" and laughed.

I whispered: "Lord, please protect me from the hands of the devil." I quickly learned. God didn't exist in South Central...

"Stop moving, Pato!" Toker said as he was doing ink on the homie.

"Shut up and just get done, Tokes!" I sat on the bed shermed out my mind. The day started off cool. Got up, burned a frijol and with no argument got with this hiena named Blanca. She was heavysset. To this day that's how I love my women. 1991, my body, covered with tats here and there, I stroked the pearl handle of my 40 caliber. Kuetes feria and dope all over the room. After I threw water on my face, I took a long look at myself in the mirror and asked myself, "What did you do to your life? What's it all for, ese?"

At that moment, I heard a knock at the door. Toker went to answer it. The rest happened in slow motion. I stepped out of the bathroom, just as he opened the door. The explosion of a 12 gauge rang in my ears. Toker flew backwards through the living room. Pato runs out from the back room. Before the words left my mouth, another blast and all I heard was Patos' cries of agony. The blast took off his whole lower jaw. Looking up, I ran full speed towards the front door firing at anything that was a moving target. By the time I was outside, people started to scream and run. I could see why. My homies' blood was sprayed and splattered all over me.

Sirens cried from the distance, the sound of LAPD's finest. My heart pounded as I ran up the calle. A voice. Female. It was Blanca. Ducking into her house she locked the door behind us. I stood there, fuska in hand just starring into space. She took it from me and with

SILENT SAM (CONT.)

tears in her eyes she asked, "What happened, Mijo? Huh? Silent! Talk to me, damn you!"

Falling to my knees, I hugged her legs and cried. She got down next to me and held me. I remember her saying, "It's okay. You're safe now," as she ran her fingers over my bald head. Sad to say, there's no place safe in the barrio. . .

Toker's murder changed my heart forever. Something had finally snapped inside of me. I stood looking at him. He looked so peaceful. It was a big funeral. LAPD was posted outside for the safety of those attending. Behind my shades, tears filled my eyes. Blanca was right beside me holding my hand. Her eyes swollen and red. I bent over and kissed my homie on the cheek.

Toker, why? It should've been me! You gots a familia and those who love you ese! It ain't fair!

My mind screamed and I pulled away from Blanca. I told Cartoon, "Get the homies and meet me in the neighborhood!"

Blanca cried after me, "No baby! Please! Oh God No! I love you Samuel!"

To wish the hands of time to reverse itself wouldn't help a bit. The clock in many ways has forsaken my soul. Still I won't give up. I'm not quick to fly a white flag and just lay down and die.

This isn't a physical fight, mind you. It's a fight that's waged behind the walls of insanity. Fight my friends. Conquer the enemy. Grab the bull by the horns, stay on it like Blue Bonnet! Look adversity in his eyes and laugh. Always remember to laugh.

In the barrios, ghettos, 'hoods and blocks, we fight with our rivals. I urge you to take a very long look at the big picture. Study it all from all angles. Then get up and look into the mirror. Who do you see? Yes, you! You are your worst enemy! The fight lies deep within the soul...

A Cry Of A Convict

Walls of bitterness surround me
Inner anger takes control:
12 years in the penal system
At 31 damned years old...

They asked me why I hate so hard
Try walking in my shoes
Try being who I thought I was
When all I did was lose...

Society's most hated and
Reprimanded for eternal sin:
When all I did was cash in my chips
And rolled the dice again...

Is it really wrong to kill a man?
The question lingers in my mind:
When the state of Califas is trying so hard
To slam us till the end of time...

No doubt has society failed
By not giving me a chance:
Sitting in this four cornered room
Just roaming in a trance...

I blame no one for my transgressions see,
For it was my hand that drew first blood:
With all reality it was me who failed
'Cause I only wanted to be loved...

**12 years in the
penal system
At 31 damned
years old...**

SILENT SAM (CONT.)

Dear Beat

How is it going? It's been along time since I've contacted you. For that I'd like to apologize. With this case of mine, it's running me into the dirt. But still I got to stay strong. The song says "Only the strong survive."

...I'm still thankful. Thankful for being alive. Out of all life's struggles, the main thing for me is to survive. That in itself can be such a trying experience.

I know it's been some time since I've submitted any pieces. That's one of the main reasons why I'm writing. I'm going to start putting down on paper again. A lot of things I got on my chest need to be released. I'm to the point of exploding. I know it's better to write than act out on pure anger and frustration.

Volume 9.29 of the mag landed in my cell a couple of weeks ago. For some odd reason, this certain issue touched my heart in a way it's never been touched before. I guess my hard heart is softening up a bit. That's a no-no in here. Yet if it's for the youths sake, I'd try to be a saint.

The artwork done by my Asian bro, Dat Nguyen, was and still is stupendous! Me myself, I'm Samoan, Japanese and Irish. So I can relate to his writings and point of view on things. His heart is good and I am glad there's men such as Dat Nguyen who dedicates his time to the magazine's cause.

For months I sat around my cell drowning in a pool of self-pity and out of nowhere, I said, "Sam, pick yourself up, and keep on going." You see, as my lil' pity party was in full swing, I just sat there and thought about how many of those youngstas I could have planted that seed of hope in, and how for some, it's way too late.

I can't sit around like that anymore. It's tearing me up. So I pulled myself together and put tips on my pencils, told myself it's time, let's do this. Throughout the years of my incarceration, I've seen men come and go — then come right back. It makes me mad.

Yet, at one time I was the same way. It's like, the faces never change. All have facades of anger and hateful masks, but many I've grown up with from childhood and know that is not in them to be 'that guy.' It's a mask of survival. A smile to most can be categorized as one of two things: #1, weakness, or #2, deception. The latter outweighs the first.

It's a saying that goes, "This is a place where the strong get stronger and the weak get weaker." This is sad but true. When reality kicks a person dead in their ass, they tend to take it the wrong way. That's how stupidity has utterly blinded them. They become blind to the fact that this life we live is only for a short moment. It was giving to us to enjoy and cherish. Outside of that, unfortunately circumstances tend to block an individual from maxing out by doing their best and pushing as hard as they can.

It's mostly hard for the kids and folks who have been raised in the barrios and ghettos throughout the country. They've always been told such as myself that they will never amount to anything. This has been drilled to their most inner consciousness, and they believe it!

Let's take for example a person of color. When they are old enough to understand that in many ways they are different because of their skin color they have an inferiority complex they have to continually deal with. They are told, whether they are well-to-do or living in the ghettos, that because of their race and skin color, they will not in any way be accepted or make it in life.

Another example (please don't let women read this part), a woman is on a constant worry about her weight. "Do I look fat? Do I look fat?" Though she may be perfect all around, if you start to tell this woman over and over again that she's fat again, she will eventually start to believe it and let herself go. That's when you walk in on her after work and this fat cow of an old lady is working out to Richard Simmons... sweating to the oldies... yuck! She will try and try. Then in time just give up and go on being that whale that the man created with his own mouth and by the woman believing every word that's said. Sad but true.

That's how society is. They put down men and women, kids and teens who have been raised on the wrong side of the tracks, physically or mentally. They can't seem to shake all that was put in their hands. They sure ain't gone listen to anybody who's lived a sheltered life. But they will listen to one of their own. That's why I want o write more.

I hope I haven't bored you to death by now, but I just wanted to let you know, I'll be sending many pieces for you for print. I know the words that I kick will touch somebody's heart. If I can touch one person's heart, I have planted a seed that others can water, or I'll be the water for the seed dat Sir Turtle and the rest have planted. Either way, it's all about making a difference.

I know it's better to write than act out on pure anger and frustration.

6IX PAC

The following piece called, "Don't Blame The System" comes to us from a young lady who goes by the name of 6ix Pac, who writes us from the CYA in Ventura County. We like to hear from more women, young or old, because they are truly a rare voice in the BWO section. Read on folks 'cause she gives it to us raw and real!

Don't Blame The System

Hey what's up readers, I'm 6ix Pac and I have something to say. I'ma start off by saying the system don't owe you shhh. You don't like the way the system is ran — stop coming to jail.

I'm in CYA doing two years and that's what I came to do. I don't expect nothing on a gold platter. I don't complain and I don't grieve nothing 'cause you should not be here.

If I wanted a clean white wall or fresh covers or good food, then I should have my black ass at home. Don't do the crime if you can't do the time. I'm not on the system's side, hell no I'm not. I agree that it's messed up, but don't expect nothing good when you did something bad to get locked up. It's called suffering the consequences. Why should jail be luxurious? So we can keep coming back? Since it's so messed up and getting worse, we should not want to come back.

So since I like fresh shoes and clean walls and I like to eat when I want to, I'm gonna use this as a lesson and never come back and y'all should do the same and stop blaming the system. Thank you. And I just wanna say to The Beat that what y'all put together is real tight. I like it. Keep doing what you do.

Life

Hey what's up? It's the baby in Da Beat, just sittin' here readin' Da Beat. I've notice that Da Beat Within is always talking about life. Well I'm go give you my life in da game.

Well, let's put it like this: I'm the baby in the family which is a bad thing. Everyone that is older than me (meaning my brother and sisters) would punk me. Yes, when I was younger, I was a punk. They say they did it to make me tough. I had to try to prove to them I wasn't a punk by fighting other kids for no reason at all. When I got my ass whupped, they wanted to beat me up too.

My oldest sister who is now 22 still sometimes do it to me, But now I beat her up (payback). My brother is 18 — he has no more time to fight me. But what I hate is that he has four baby moms already. My sister, 17, she still beats me up but she give me props cause I don't give up. She's like a boy. Then it's me, 12.

So you know bein' that far apart in age is really hard for me. They (meaning my brother and sisters) wanted to pick me up on game fast by telling me how to count money, how to make money fast. My brother called himself a so-called pimp, so he always tried to show me how to walk like a pimp, talk like a pimp — just flat out be a pimp.

Then he got me into sellin'. I got caught up one time for sellin', but I was too young to go to the hall so they told my mom. Then my mom sent me to my granny. Soon after that I went back to my mom. I found out my 17-year-old sister — who was 12 around the time

BABY JUVENILE

Baby Juvenile drops in once again. We first met her in San Mateo County Juvenile Hall, but now she writes from her current placement in CYA. Believe it or not, this young writer is all of 12 years old — as you'll read in her piece, this youngster's been through more in her young life than most go through in a much longer life. Simply stated, we can't believe this piece came from the mind of someone so young; and we can't believe the strength she shows in writing it all down. We look forward to hearing more from her again soon.

— was a prostitute. I got real mad at my brother 'cause I thought he put her on the track, come to find out no one knew so she beat me up. This was when I was seven.

My dad got shot right in front of me, I think seven is a bad number. Now I was seven and he got shot seven times. That's when I really started actin' a fool.

I got to go. To be continued...

My last sentence was: That's when I really started acting a fool. My dad was everything to me. In my life my dad and mom was locked up a lot so my older sister took care of us. She just had a birthday on November 18. She made sure we had clothes on our back. I think she had it bad 'cause she had a baby herself then.

I don't even think I had a bad life — maybe the style but not the life itself. You know I'm not go' lie, I still live the lifestyle. I say "Hey I'm 'bout to be a rapper 'cause of this life style — what yo' lifestyle gonna give me?"

Growin' up in my house you had to do it the wrong way to get what you really wanted. And that's what I did. But like I said, my life ain't hard, it's just a struggle. I'm go leave y'all at that.

MARGARET "MINA" GILLENWATER-GAYTON

We are so privileged to have the following piece and letter from a new writer in Margaret "MINA" Gillenwater-Gayton, who writes us from the Texas Department of Correction in Marlin, Texas. This very talented writer drops a riveting poem and letter that truly touches our hearts. We look forward to hearing more from MINA, she has too much to share to be silent. We anticipate her next submissions.

Dear Beat

I am a female freelance writer/artist currently into my 7th year flat on a 12 year sentence for the crime of "INTOXICATED MANSLAUGHTER." I am a native of California. I was traveling with my then fiancé and celebrating rather irresponsibly. We were both consuming alcohol throughout the night; we later switched driving positions, therefore placing me behind the wheel. I ended up losing control of the vehicle and wrecked after hitting the median on the highway... my fiancé John Anthony was fatally injured and died later that morning, while in emergency surgery. It was the worse experience of my life!

Since then I have been doing my time and focusing on trying to educate others on the vital importance of the choices we make. Choices that surely mean — the difference between life and death. I'm now into my 4th year of a college degree, my major is Criminal Justice. I have also been working on a book while doing my time; one that promotes healing from the inside out. I've written several articles that are now recently attracting nationwide attention whereas these articles aim to enlighten the public about matters that "the convict" can surely relate.

I have a strong drive to which serves with organizations such as ACLU, CURE, and this state's TPLU which was founded and therefore organized by ex-cons.

I'd like to send you, for starters, one of my writings: "Forever Night." I wrote this on the issue on which saddens me personally, the death penalty but the special emphasis on the event, death itself. Would you please accept this piece that I dedicate to the prisoners who are sitting on our nation's death rows?

Also, would you please send me a subscription of The Beat? I thank you with the sincerest of appreciation.

I ended up losing control of the vehicle and wrecked after hitting the median on the highway... my fiancé John Anthony was fatally injured

Forever Night

A timeless spread of silence
A space so undefined
A starless sky
The moon eclipsed
In death I'm now confined
My heart no longer beating
My eyes no longer see
My ears no longer listening
My speech no longer free
Release me unto the sound of gentle streams
That gather in the forests of night
Beneath the moon
As stars are spilled out of the heavens
Like cream
Bathed in a celestial splendor of resilience
I move forward, pushing up again
Beyond the night I tip-toe quietly again
Creeping between dawn and sunrise
Barefoot, and barely conscious of the sensations
That permeate the physical being of me
I ventured beyond the perpetual spirals of TIME.

Forever Night is for the condemned prisoners on death rows everywhere. What the mind forgets, the heart never will.

TOM WITT

Our resident Blues writer, Tom Witt, is back to deliver his final installment of a three part story of the legendary Chicago Blues scene. By way of background this 53 year resident of Eugene, Oregon, first fell in love with the blues when he was 20 years old. At the time he was introduced to the likes of Muddy Water, Freddie King, Howlin Wolf, Little Walter and dozens of lesser known artist. Witt states that his first live blues show "had a incredible impact on his life, almost a spiritual impact." Walking into the Ashgrove, in Los Angeles, California, seeing the great JB Hutton & the Hawks on stage was all that he needed to be convinced that the blues, would be his first love in music. Currently he is an album reviewer for the Eugene, Weekly in Eugene, Oregon. He has also written for Rollin Rock, Whiskey Wimmen and, was West Coast Correspondent for several years for Living Blues. This series, SO MANY ROADS, has taken us from rural blues players, to electrified blues of dance clubs in the inner city. The highway we will travel on will soon leave Chicago, where we are this week, then on to Texas, and California. The focus has and will be on the six string slingers, who are important in the history of this American Music. Along the way he also points out how society and social issues played a role in the music. For your information, in issue 9.47 we reintroduced "So Many Roads" with part 1 and 2 introducing us readers to Rural Blues. As we have stated in past issues, if any of you readers have any questions regarding American Music, don't hesitate to drop our friend Tom a line through The Beat Within.

So Many Roads, Chicago Blues Part 3

When the likes of Muddy Waters and Howlin Wolf were kings of the Chicago blues scene, younger players such as Otis Rush, Magic Sam, Jr Wells, Buddy Guy, Luther Allison, Billy Boy Arnold, Jimmy "Fast Fingers" Dawkins, John Littlejohn, Son Seals, Carey Bell and others were improving their skills, waiting for the torch to be passed to them. Guy, Rush, Bell and Arnold are alive and still performing today.

Harmonica player Jr. Wells played with Muddy Waters for a brief time. Wells played the harmonica with passion matched by very view, his playing was almost spiritual, played with the fervor of a church man or woman who "had the feelin". Johnny Lee Williamson was a huge influence on Jr.'s style. I think it's fair to say that Wells was as good as Little Walter as a singer, and player but not as a song-writer. Walter is often rated the greatest Chicago player ever.

Wells first recorded for States Records when he was 18 years old. He was backed by the great Freddy Below Jr., on drums. Below Jr. was the very definition of Chicago blues drumming. His second record for States was recorded when he was AWOL from the Army. Not surprising since young Wells nature was rebellious. Record sales for Jr. Wells and others of his generation were up and down. Wells had one minor hit, "Messin' With the Kid." His albums for the Vanguard label, a folk label, had decent sales, selling mostly to white hippies. He frequently teamed up with Buddy Guy, they often toured Europe, and opened rock concerts for the likes of the Rolling Stones in America.

Buddy Guy is a monster of a guitar player, a great singer, an amazing showman, on stage he is electrifying. As a songwriter he is average. Buddy Guy is a star on the summer festival circuit today. He has recorded for almost 50 years. If you have heard B.B. King, then you have an idea of how Guy sounds.

Blues like other art forms has gone through good and bad economic times. When bookings were down, or moving into smaller venues, the blues artist was hit hard. During such times Buddy Guy and Jr. Wells joined forces, for both club dates and recordings. What a force it was. I saw Wells and Guy together in a small club in Southern California. The band was tight, Wells and Guy's interplay had the audience in the palm of their hands. Such was that skill, it seemed liked they had played together for decades.

On bass for the band that night was the great James Jamerson, who played bass on hundred's of Motown hits, by the likes of The Supremes, Four Tops, Temptations and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles.

Otis Rush like Buddy Guy was influenced by B.B. King. His first recording was for the Cobra label, "I Can't Quit You Baby," was also recorded by the rock group Led Zeppelin. A quiet man, Rush sides for Cobra are as good as the blues get in any era. "My Love Will Never Die," is a heartbreaking ballad, "Jump Bessie Jump" makes one think of a weekend night of dancing and fun.

Rush was out of the music business during the end of the

1960's from emotional problems. In mid 1970's Rush toured the west coast. Three nights in Los Angeles I saw his brilliant guitar playing and heard his voice, a voice that can make one cry, then a few seconds later, leap in joy. Otis came up to this young man, the third night, asked me if I was going up to Santa Barbara to see him. You bet I was. When he spotted me, he asked "well are you going up to the bay area with me, 3 more nights?" I was in awe, the great Otis Rush came up to me.

Rush continues playing today, despite having a stroke 2 years ago. Not the singer or guitarist he once was, but his fans from Europe to Asia and the United States, continue to come to see him play, one of the songs we love is, "So Many Roads." "Roads" is a slow burning blues where Otis cries out like few others can.

Had Magic Sam lived long enough, he would have been a big star on the blues circuit, if he had decided to play rock like Jimi Hendrix, he could have been as big as Jimi in the rock world. Magic Sam also recorded for Cobra Records, he was very popular in Chicago, where he packed clubs like few others. In 1959, he was drafted into the army, he spent one month in the army and six months in the brig, for desertion. After the army Magic Sam's recording career seemed to be finished. In 1966 he recorded one of several albums for the Delmark label. These are outstanding blues albums showing Sam to be an outstanding singer and guitarist. He was playing to big crowds in Europe. At the age of 32 he died from a heart attack. He was on the verge of bigger and better things.

Luther Allison, Son Seals, John Littlejohn. Jimmy "Fast Fingers" Dawkins became famous and recorded their best work later in their lives. Dawkins and Allison recorded albums for Delmark in the late 1960's. In the early 1970's Allison recorded two albums for the Gordy label, which is part of the Motown family. After seeing Allison headline a club in Los Angeles, with about 12 people in the house, one has no question why Allison went to Europe to find fame. When Allison came back to the USA in the late 70's he recorded several outstanding albums for the Alligator label. Before Allison's death from cancer, he stood on top of the blues world with B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Bobby Bland.

Seals, Dawkins and Littlejohn were excellent guitarist in their own right, and led tight Chicago Blues Bands. During his time John Littlejohn was the best slide guitarist, owing a debt to Elmore James, and Tampa Red. Seals and Littlejohn played many blues festivals in the states, while Dawkins played frequently in Europe.

Billy Boy Arnold and Carey Bell started playing gigs with name bands while still in their teens. Bell played with Muddy Waters for about a year. Had a chance to sit down with him when he played with the Kid Ramos Band, 2 summers ago. He relayed stories of listening to blues bands in the summer time, sitting in alleys as a young teen, when back doors were open. He lived near Little Walter for a couple years, and as he put it "I would pester Walter for harmonica lessons, as much as he would tolerate me".

Billy Boy Arnold, was 12 years old when he was introduced to the blues world. He had been hearing blues records his parents played since he was an infant. One day his dad mentioned that Johnny Lee Williamson lived in the general neighborhood. A persistent Arnold asked strangers where he lived till he found Sonny Boy's home. At age 12 he knocked on his door, and the man himself opened the door and invited the child in. A few months later Arnold would run into Jr. Wells who was buying harmonicas in a pawn shop, he once again found himself getting free lessons. Fast forward to 1955, Arnold cut "I Wish You Would," for the VJ label. This would become a classic blues recording, played by thousands of blues bar bands in every corner of the world, till this very day. The English group the Yardbirds had a hit with it in the mid 1960's.

Decades would pass by with little news of Billy Boy Arnold, in the 1990's he recorded some outstanding albums for the Black Top label. Arnold recently was a guest on the Blaster's dvd "Goin Home." At age 70 he is still in top form.

How big was the Chicago Blues Scene, in the 1950's a map of the clubs showed that 53 clubs existed at various times. Some of them right around the corner, or up the block from each other.

We will return next week with a two part feature on Texas blues.

Response To Victim Topic

If I may, I would like to comment on this issue, 9.30. See, I started reading this volume, which had the topic, "Victim" (what would you say, etc.). With all due respect to the minds of this publication, of the norms that think with the experience of the trials and tribulations of any and all lifestyles, I ask a question(s) to see if any can help a "blind" one.

I have heard that in viewing this issue it may be inhuman, an iniquity to "kill"/take another's life and that no reason(s) could justify an act of the such. Yet, please try to put yourself in the "shoes" of the "murderer," as many choose to label the doer of this deed, and many may say, "I could never do such a thing to harm anyone," such a premature statement, understandable. Yet, do understand that not all the so-called victims are not in the wrong, or have had no fault in such matters. Where you may see the family of this "victim" crying, asking why did this other person, this murderer, have to do the "dirty deed of the devil."

Well, please excuse me when I say the following, yet, "Think, you hypocritical, stereotypical believer of false propaganda, telling only half the truth, that maybe your damn angel, that is now gone forever, put him/herself in such a situation, where it led to where the murderer was motivated to overlook the so-called "value of life." That one can be driven by an emotion, so that one can accomplish the impossible! Have not painters painted beautiful dreams or nightmares, driven by the passion or emotion to express, relate, release?

And this so-called value of life, where is such a value when your judges/society is quick to take a life in return (hypocritical)? Since older days, such an example has been ingrained in minds, hearts, souls. Or, where is such a value when we let others starve . . . such a value that from birth we feel our souls we live to die, dying to live! Even that "religion" teaches/shows their followers to expect/prepare for death when we are here to live! They teach that we are marked to die upon drawing thy first breath, and some may: this is different, a whole other situation. How so when both end in the same result, as in war, murderers/defenders march to kill/protect, as does this murderer who had to protect himself/herself (or those who are more than blood/heart to heart family) from this victim/angel? Why must one choose to hear only one side of a story? And why should this murderer feel sorry, repent for such deed that many say is wrong when in heart and soul, knowing he/ she has protected, feel so right? Does your god repent for letting it happen? Ah, excuse me for getting carried away, yet this subject, I feel, is not really understood . . .

Q: How can one have such a peace as those in the grave, so free in mind while thy body is chained as a slave?

A: Thoughts that are hidden in understanding/realization, not a judgment!! That thy knows of many paths, yet your challenge in existing is to set thine own path into the abyss. For your heart is forever immortal as is your soul. In darkness we forever travel, your heart/soul is the light! Fear not the shadows in which we walk, that touches your nose, seeing nothing pass. Know the light you were given shall lead you, have faith, have hope, have will!!

JAIME SANDOVAL Jaime Sandoval writes us from a facility in Beeville, Texas, at the suggestion of an old friend, Antonio Bacos. Sadly, it has taken forever to get his pieces typed and edited so we're afraid that we have pushed Jaime's patience to the limit. Please forgive us. Jaime first piece is a response to a topic we had in *The Beat* in 2004: "The Victim— If you had the chance to meet your victim or his/her family, would you want to? Why or why not? What would you say to your victim? . . ." Jaime's viewpoint is quite controversial, but we're sure many others feel the same way. The poems that follow are powerful, too. We hope you enjoy what follows.

So Many Paths

So many paths, each unto its own, yet none are
meant/made to flee
Conscious is the flown key.
This key is the key
that opens the door to insanity . . .
And there, far away, is this place indeed,
This is where the stranger waits far from reality.



The Future

A future, distant, only the hidden eye can grasp
Grass, green of dark, hidden objects that lurk in shadows,
Trees . . . stand, deep brown of shadows, deep in decay
Birds . . . phantoms of a violent force, moving unseen
Structures . . . unknown, stand alone, immobile and frightening.
Objects so flown, existence so perfect
A past so present, dark and incomprehensible
Corpses . . . pale, destroyed, mutilated and scattered, Crucified,
once living beings, by a force so malignant, left in oblation
Echoing thunder from a bearer breaker, leaving this ecocide
Steel, turn to mausoleums, stand witness, glowing in place,
Homo sapiens, bodies so perfect, minds so flown
Flush it away, watch it do down, flushed knowingly

Maybe I wrote the wrong ones, wrong subject,
and maybe I live the wrong life
Take care, stranger,
blessed be thy path . . . I dismiss myself with the utmost

Trees . . . stand, deep brown of shadows, deep in decay
Birds . . . phantoms of a violent force, moving unseen
Structures . . . unknown, stand alone, immobile and frightening.

RAY SANCHEZ, JR.

Ray Sanchez, Jr., who goes by the name of the Elf, returns to The Beat Without with another powerful piece. We sometimes sit in the office, reading his pieces aloud as they arrive — heads nod and shake in sympathy with and recognition of the truth he spits. In the following piece, Ray writes a piece aimed directly at those of you caught up in the life, no matter how you define it. As he says in his letter, "There are ways out and it requires sacrifices, but more importantly it involves identifying the problem first." The talented, and deep, Ray Sanchez comes to us from San Mateo County Jail in Redwood City.

Locked

I was raised to believe your click was your family. If they don't eat, you don't eat. Maybe that's why they call funk "beef." Homies carry heaters, ready to barbeque these streets. Proud to be grimy, but tired of doing time. Everyone wanna be a rapper, but they spittin' the same rhymes. Bling, rims, kicks, clothes, "hos," riding, lost lives. The same lines. That's how the game goes, but who made the rules?

There's more politickin' in prisons than on Capitol Hill. Cons vie for positions where a vote can kill. Pick an' choose, win or lose; it ain't all black and white, day or night. We got twilights and sunsets. There's beauty in the ghettos, 'hoods, alleys and projects. You just gotta look for it. Some think money's the answer, that's why they juke for it. Lookin' for love in wrong places. Confusing love and lust. Some folks got two faces.

LUPE

Lupe used to be detainee at San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center (YGC) but is now, or at least was, writing us from Daytop, an outside program. Lupe was a powerful and honest writer in YGC, and as you'll see, she still is. Lupe sent us these two poems a while back. We hope she's been able to get through these rough spots and is progressing in a positive way. We wish her all the best.

Screw You

Hell, what I'm going through
I really don't care,
Screw what you say
You're really not there,
Screw the fact that I'm here
'Cause you seem not to see me,
Screw the fact that I said I care
'Cause you don't believe me,
Screw that I was talking to you,
But you don't seem to hear,
Screw what I try to tell you,
You don't know what it's about,
Screw when you said you cared,
It was all just a lie,
Screw that I opened up to you,
You just sat there and stared,
Screw that you said you respect me,
'Cause obviously you don't care!
Screw when I cried on your shoulder,
You showed me no support,
Screw when you wiped my tears,
In your eyes you were touching someone else who
Wasn't there, a ghost!
Screw the first time you talked to me,
Truly you have nothing to say,
Screw the day I met you,
You ended up slipping away!
(Dedicated to I don't know who. It just came to me
all of a sudden, a feeling of some sort. I don't know
who.)

Back to me, my interpretation of shadow society. Why do I gotta yell for someone to hear 'bout what I believe. I mean, do you really think we want to shoot each other? Kill our sistas and brothers? Sell to our seniors and let the pipes get 'em smothered? Snap back to reality! "Hunger and necessity are poor teachers of morality." Jealousy and greed burn like wildfire where cats got nothing. Lives expire when they see you have something. Everyone wants a slice of the pie but there ain't none, so they fight for crumbs.

How does this dude got a car and jewels and still live wit' his mom? He a glorified bum. Broke ballas, hookers tired of thei' looks, the thief who tired of being a crook; mob cats who tired of bustin' a gun, sick of seeing young homies who think this is fun; gang bangers who stuck to their gang knowing it's their lives if their colors fade; folks yellin' "Ride or die!" knowin' damn well they'd choose life over death and a house on tha hill over a slum in the sets.

This is for y'all who know each coin got two sides but can't seem to flip and do right. Y'all got my heart and sympathy 'cause y'all feel locked in the game, lost in the rain. To the track girl, dealer, thieves and killas, I feel ya pain. Y'all know my name, E-L-F, by helpin' y'all I help myself, and maybe stand out in the eyes of the Lord above. Y'all feel locked in the game, and know what? I'm just like ya.

Feelings

I'm feeling very stressed
Don't want to be here,
Contemplating on leaving this pinche (damn) place,
These hynas irritate me
I've just finished crying
Almost for an hour.
I'm feeling so much pain right now
But there's really no trigger or power.
I feel a shortage in my heart
Don't even know where it'd come from!
Or even less how'd it start
Feeling very annoyed
All theses punk rock females
Daytop, huh?
Damn, what to do? Should I run?
But if I get caught, then what to do?
Been here for three weeks,
They say only the strong survive, a
Am I strong enough?
I know someday I gots to face reality
Take it like a soldier and
Do what I got to do.
If I can make it in the streets,
I can make it here
That's how I gotta think,
I guess I'm just afraid of change and
I'm asking myself
Will there be more pain
Or will I do what I gots to do and
I'm asking myself,
Will there be more pain
Or will I do what I got to do and regain?
Not really sure
But for now these are my feelings
I guess it's best told as sadness and pain!

**If I can make it in the streets,
I can make it here
That's how I gotta think**

Pain From The Soul

I sometimes want to cry out to the Lord and ask him why he's put me here. Why does He allow me to go through so much pain? I wonder why he's taken me away from my loved ones. I'm going through so much agony and pain — I want it to stop. I don't want to be here no more...

I sometimes feel like punching these concrete walls until I bleed. But instead I bite my lip and hold it in. I have so much anger and pain. I want to go crazy. I want to cry out and ask Him why. These are some questions I may never know.

I often shed tears when I'm alone, because I have a daughter and yet I can't be there for her. I'm hurting deep inside. I may not show it, but I am. I put on a smiling face just to hide my pain. I know the Lord could make it stop and yet I'm still in pain. Falling tears are coming down my face.

Why, oh Lord, must I be this way? Why have you taken me away? Why do you allow me to suffer? Why? Why do you have me here? Please, oh Lord, make this agony and pain go away.

Dreams Of Death

A dream is a dream, but when
you dream a dream of death
and you wake up in sweat and tears
and the pain of the dream is with
you when you awake...

Well, guess what —
The dream I dreamed
was of my own death
along with the world...
Fire and screams and crying
is what I've seen...

I just dreamed a dream that ain't
just a dream
but a dream I never want
to dream again...

NEGRO

The following piece comes to us from Negro, who was once in the maximum-security unit in Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150 Crew. He now drops the following piece from CYA Preston in Lone, California. He writes the following piece to his girlfriend. We're glad he's kept his word of keeping in touch.

Stay On My Mind

No matter what I do, you stay on my mind
Even when I was on the grind
No matter what I do, you stay on my mind
It's hard to tell people, you ain't mine
No matter what I do, you stay on my mind
I think about you all the time
No matter what I do, you stay on my mind
Even the day I did my crime
No matter what I do, you stay on my mind
Damn baby girl, you so fine
No matter what I do, you stay on my mind
You should already know you're a top-notch dime
No matter what I do you stay on my mind
I can't wait to get out to make you mine.

DELFINO MARTINEZ

We welcome yet another new contributor to The Beat Without fold. Delfino Martinez is a young man doing time in the SHU at Corcoran State Prison. He was introduced to The Beat by an unnamed fellow contributor in the SHU, and took it upon himself to drop these following pieces our way. They run the gamut, from a poem to his love, to a poem of despair, to a poem about a nightmare he had. We thank Delfino for his contributions, and we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

From Me To You

We've been together
for all these years
and my heart still skips a beat
when you're near
and when you're far away
From me to you
I'll always love you
'til the end of time
From me to you
God has blessed me with
a kind, loving, sweet and caring woman
and that woman is you
From me to you
You understand the agony
the pain and the tears I shed
From me to you
I can't stop loving you
you mean the world to me
You have been there for me
through my ups and downs
From me to you
you my love
will always have my heart
From me to you
I could never turn my back on you
From me to you
let's stand by each other
let's cry together
let's smile together
let's share the love we still have
and never let go
From me to you
let's tell the whole world
how much we love each other
From me to you
I'll forever love you
From me to you
you take my heart and hold onto it
and never let go
Because I'm doing the same
From me to you
I love you so

**I sometimes feel
like punching these
concrete walls until I
bleed. But instead I
bite my lip and hold
it in. I have so much
anger and pain. I
want to go crazy.**

ALICIA Alicia was once a powerful writer in our writing workshops in San Francisco's YGC. She is now handling her business at the girl's YA alternative in Aurora, Colorado, learning a lot and getting ready to graduate before she comes back to San Francisco. We hope you appreciate the heartfelt poems she sent.

You've Been Gone For So Long

You've been gone for so long
that I can't remember your touch,
kisses and hugs,
but most of all I miss your smile.

You've been gone for so long that all I can do is
reminisce about the time we spent together,
but all I can say is I hope this lasts forever.

You've been gone for so long
that the only thing that keeps me going
is the love we have for each other
and no one can take what we have.

You've been gone for so long
that when I see you for the first time
I will lose my mind
But the first thing I'll say to you
is I love you and welcome home.

**You've been gone
for so long
that the only thing that
keeps me going
is the love we have for
each other**

CRAIG FUNK The following piece comes to us from Craig Funk aka Ghost, a former participant from SF/YGC and intern at The Beat Within. Unfortunately, he is no longer working with us and finds himself in Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, CA. He will be locked up for at least another year, but we wish him the best of luck and hope he stays in touch with us. The following piece reached our desk on the eve of Christmas

If There Was A Christmas For Me

If there was a Christmas for me, I would make sure it would be just perfect and one to remember for times. My 3-year-old son would be jumping up and down in excitement in his Blues Clues PJ's hitting my shoulder saying, "daddy, daddy you need to wake up. Santa came last night!" So me and my son are walking towards the tree that you can tell a child decorated himself, with old Garfield and Disney ornaments, and big globs of silver tinsel in 8 different spaces on the small 6 1/2 foot tree. He lets go of my hand and runs toward the tree that magically developed 6 new presents from Santa overnight.

Knees gliding across the rug, grabbing the biggest present and ripping it to shreds. You can hear the wrapping paper tear with Mickey Mouse and Pluto on them thru the whole house. (ssssshhreeec). He yells yippee a hummer power wheel. I look out the window and notice that it's snowing outside but since this is a Christmas to remember for times, it's normal for snow in San Francisco this year.

I make myself a cup of Folgers instant coffee and

Can You Forgive Me?

I wasn't there for you when you needed me the most.

I made it seem like I didn't care
but deep inside I really did.
Can you forgive me?

I made you feel small and I acted like I didn't care.
But no matter what I did, you never gave up on us.
Can you forgive me?

I wish I could take back all the shhh I put you through.

If I could set the time back you know I would.
I regret taking you for granted.
Can you forgive me?

I'm sorry for making you shed a tear,
a tear that you could of shed for happiness not a
tear of loneliness.
Can you forgive me?

Sometimes

Sometimes I wonder porque (why) you treat me the way you do.
Es porque (is it because) you're insecure of yourself?

Sometimes tú actuas (you act) so different
y yo no sé porque (and I don't know why)
Is it because tu ya no me amas? (you don't love me anymore)

Sometimes you leave and don't come back hasta el otro día (until the next day).

Is it porque you have someone else?

Sometimes tu me pegas y despues
you always say "I'm sorry"

Is it porque tú piensas (is it because you think)
that I'm 'a leave you?

But cuando me preguntes (when you ask me) if I still love you
lo único (the only thing) that I can say is:

my son a hot cocoa with whip cream and marshmallows. I give him his cocoa, he takes one sip and he forgets about forever. He's back at ripping open presents, while I'm in the kitchen I hear happy yells every 3 minutes as he discovers new toys. I make him his favorite breakfast links and a glass of Donald Duck OJ. As we eat breakfast my parents, Mathew's grandparents, come over with a video camera already on because as I told you this is a Christmas to remember for times.

They have more presents for their pooty grandson. Grandma brings him a knitted sweater and you can tell he doesn't like it. He just throws it on the floor when her back is turned. Grandpa brings him a Nerf suction cup dart gun. He so happy he hugs grandpa's leg and starts shooting the ceiling with little yellow Styrofoam darts. Grandpa has a huge smile and says, "Merry Christmas!" I hug my parents and tell them to turn the camera off that I haven't even brushed my hair yet, so they turn it on to the little Blues Clues bandit that's now shooting the TV, as me and grandpa watch old taped 49er Super Bowls. Grandpa constantly rewinds plays over and over which annoys me for hours.

Grandma picks up all the wrapping paper shreds she says "Wow, that was a mess to remember." And grandpa says, "That's a play to remember." Mathew says this is his favorite Christmas he can remember. And I say, that would be a Christmas to remember if I wasn't doing time.

Much love to all in and outside the walls. Merry Christmas.

Tuning out negativity of external forces Life situations are affected by choices.

DESHAUN LAVENDER Back again with two powerful poetic contributions is our old friend Deshaun Lavender. While dealing with the madness of prison oppression (when he submitted these pieces in December, the African-American and Euro-American prisoners at High Desert Prison where he writes us from had been locked down for 17 months!), he still manages to apply his keen mind to the set up on the streets that lead youngsters to where he is. Recognizing that prisoners are virtual slaves ("we work for pennies, profits gets shifted to prison industries"), he is speaking as much to himself as to the rest of Beat readers when he advises "Tuning out negativity of external forces" and investing in a positive future ("...send my seed to college, the business he can maintain."). It's pieces like these that make The Beat Within (and Without) such an extraordinary publication!

-REAL TALK-

City of stars, celebrities and the ones behind bars,
with tattoos and war scars, khakis, slingshots and all-
stars.

Soldiers pulling decades, chameleonizing the game,
transformed French braids into wavy fades,
blending in, but the temper's ready made.

Gangsters of the inner cities,
gained knowledge in the penitentiary, becomes witty.

Viewing the game like politicians,
playing positions only checkmates the mission.

Not a Kamikaze, brainstorming is a hobby.

Never misuse your team is a learned savvy.

Analyzing these cats, observing what level they on,
you can be baddest to the bone.

If you don't utilize your mind you get sent home.

You can't roam.

You'll have a cat caught up —
or in a visiting room conversating over tapped phones,
with country blues on.

It's not all in the heart; heart is where it starts.

Have to develop your mind to play a part.

The opposition's smart, government mastered the art
of manipulation.

Got me viewing you as my enemy without hesitation.

Assatta Shakur said:

Never allow your enemies to define who your enemies
are.

I've done that so far.

Don't hate 'cause I push luxury cars,
stack your money and stop tricking profits at strip bars.

Cats like you with limited vision, the car is all you see.

Homey, I'm negotiating a deal to own a strip bar
with my comrades seated VIP with the flyest females
next to me.

Son let me explain something. You'll receive nothing
from nothing.

My aim is to leave a legacy in this game, with my last
name,
send my seed to college, the business he can maintain.
I'll bypass the fame.

You always wanna stunt, eyes glossy red every time I
see you smoking all them blunts.

I'm focused, Man. I know the man ain't playing.

They got me serving 15 years in the pen,
no other choice but to comprehend.

Learned to think ahead writing out my thoughts,
lessons learned while messages are taught.

I hope you see what I perceive, 5 more prisons being
built by 2013.

Don't take a rocket scientist to figure out.

It's bed space for you and me,
a situation where we work for pennies,

the profits get shifted to prison industries.

Hey, I'm just holla'n at you folks, reaching out to dogs
and locs,

nothing wrong with twisting 100 spokes.

Remember, though, we can manage more than dope.

It's hard when your city flourishes from sales of coke.

Many times it's only a pipe dream filled with smoke.

A future with no hope.

We have to change the scope, tighten up the loose rope,
or remain broken eggs with no yolk.

You know the saying, "money — hoes — clothes and
the pen!"

But what about property — real estate — and land?

Our views have to change if we want to contend.

The sacrifice within sometimes is worth more than the
temporary win.

Strength courage & wisdom

OVERSTANDING

No reason for constructing this piece
Temporary loss of words, mind traveling deep,
Complex times filled with contradiction
Explanations attempted yet no one listened.

Strangers meet, engage and compete
Soul lost ravishing bread and meat,
Can't sleep, thoughts are memory laned
Images fixated on bodies laying blood stained.

Trapped inside a contaminated bottle,
Empty heart reason my emotions are shallow.
Searching for avenues called self expression,
Words never spoken may have taught me a lesson.

Tapped the resources of subconscious thought,
Meditation learned practicing spiritual arts.
Tuning out negativity of external forces
Life situations are affected by choices.

Though down, I'm definitely not out,
Up, the only movement on this route.
Physically confined to a compartment cage,
My soul resides beneath impulsive rage.

Discrimination is an obvious disadvantage,
Elements of surprise are a prize if properly managed.
Patience's a benefactor when regularly applied,
Don't mistake my advice for a lie.

There's no motivation in motivation itself,
Who knows if there's life after death?
Decisiveness leads toward wise choices,
Wisdom's heard through our elders' voices.

Character builds value in principled belief,
No Indians, everyone's an ordained chief.
Many obstacles faced subjugated in captivity.
Deal with the issue and move on in mobility.

See, I didn't pick up my pen to spread hate, animosity, or even envy. I did it to spread the truth or a positive message to the youth your publication reaches. I hope that even just one kid will read anything I've written and say, "Damn, that was some real shhh," and maybe even decide not to drink or smoke crack.

check out the rest of Sierski's BWO piece on page 65